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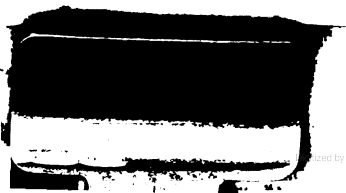
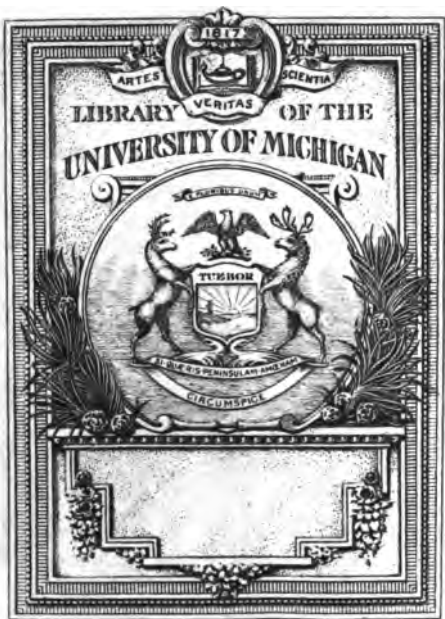
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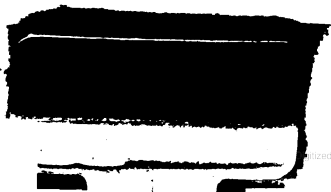
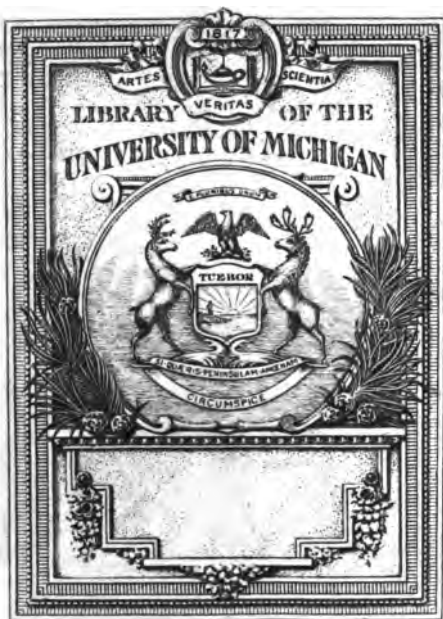
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# JOHNSONIANA.

VOL. I.



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1820.





Boswell, James

# JOHNSONIANA;

FROM

BOSWELL'S LIFE

OF THE

GREAT LEXICOGRAPHER AND MORALIST.

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VOL. I.

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“What I consider as the peculiar value of the following work, is the quantity it contains of Johnson’s conversation, which is universally acknowledged to have been eminently instructive and entertaining.”—BOSWELL.

“Dr. Johnson’s conversations, in Boswell’s Life, is much better than his published works: and the fragments of the opinions of celebrated men, preserved in their letters, or in anecdotes of them, are justly sought after as invaluable, for the same reason.”—BALDWIN’S LONDON MAGAZINE.



# JOHNSONIANA, &c.

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## PART I.

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### No. I.

#### EDUCATION.

DR. JOHNSON began to learn Latin with Mr. Hawkins, usher, or under-master of Lichfield school; "a man," said he, "very skilful in his little way." With him he continued two years, and then rose to be under the care of Mr. Hunter, the head master, who, according to his account, "was very severe—and wrong-headedly severe. He used," said he, "to beat us unmercifully: and he did not distinguish between ignorance and negligence; for he would beat a boy equally for not knowing a thing, as for neglecting to know it. He would ask a boy a question, and if he did not answer it, he would beat him, without considering whether he had an opportunity of knowing how to answer it. For instance, he would call up a boy and ask him Latin for a candlestick, which the boy could not expect to be asked. Now, sir, if a boy could answer every question, there would be no need of a master to teach him."

It is, however, but justice to the memory of Mr. Hunter, to mention, that though he might err in being too severe, the school of Lichfield was very respectable in his time. The late Dr. Taylor, prebendary of Westminster, who was educated under him, told Mr. Boswell, that "he was an excellent master, and that his ushers were most of them men of eminence; that Holbrook, one of the most ingenious men, best scholars, and best preachers of his age, was usher during the greatest part of the time that Johnson was at school. Then came Hague, of whom as much might be said, with the addition that he was an elegant poet. Hague was succeeded by Green, afterward bishop of Lincoln, whose character in the learned world is well known. In the same form with Johnson was Congreve, who afterward became chaplain to archbishop Boulter, and by this connexion obtained good preferment in Ireland. He was a younger son of the ancient family of Congreve, in Staffordshire, of which the poet was a branch: his brother sold the estate. There was also Lowe, afterward canon of Windsor."

Indeed Johnson was very sensible how much he owed to Mr. Hunter. Mr. Langton one day asked him how he had acquired so accurate a knowledge of Latin, in which, perhaps, he was exceeded by no man of his time: he said, "My master whipped me very well: without that, sir, I should have done nothing." He told Mr. Langton, that while Hunter was flogging his boys unmercifully, he used to say, "And this I do to save you from the gallows." Johnson, upon all occasions, expressed his approbation of enforcing instruction by means of the rod.

"I would rather," said he, "have the rod to be the general terror to all, to make them learn, than tell a child, if you do thus, or thus, you will be more esteemed than your brothers or sisters. The rod produces an effect which terminates in itself. A child is afraid of being whipped—and gets his task—and there's an end on't; whereas, by exciting emulation, and comparisons of superiority, you lay the foundation of lasting mischief: you make brothers and sisters hate each other."

When Johnson saw some young ladies in Lincolnshire, who were remarkably well behaved, owing to their mother's strict discipline and severe correction, he exclaimed, in one of Shakspeare's lines, a little varied,

*"Rod, I will honour thee for this thy duty."*

At a subsequent period, he observed to Dr. Rose, "There is now less flogging in our great schools than formerly, but then less is learned there; so that what the boys get at one end they lose at the other."

He thus discriminated, to Dr. Percy, bishop of Dromore, his progress at his two grammar schools: "At one I learned much in the school, but little from the master; in the other, I learned much from the master, but little in the school."

After leaving school, he remained at home two years before he went to college. What he read during this period, was not works of mere amusement—"not voyages and travels, but all literature, sir, all ancient writers, all manly; though but little Greek—only some of Anacreon and Hesiod: but in this



irregular manner I had looked into a great many books which were not commonly known at the universities, where they seldom read any books but what are put into their hands by their tutors; so that when I came to Oxford, Dr. Adams, now master of Pembroke college, told me, I was the best qualified for the university that he had ever known come there."

His apartment in Pembroke college was that upon the second floor over the gateway. One day, while he was sitting in it quite alone, Dr. Panting, then master of the college, whom he called a *fine Jacobite fellow*, overheard him uttering this soliloquy, in his strong emphatic voice, "Well, I have a mind to see what is done in other places of learning. I'll go and visit the universities abroad. I'll go to France and Italy. I'll go to Padua—and I'll mind my business: for an *Athenian* blockhead is the worst of all blockheads."

Dr. Adams observed, that Johnson, while he was at Pembroke college, "was caressed and loved by all about him, was a gay and frolicsome fellow, and passed there the happiest part of his life." But this is a striking proof of the fallacy of appearances, and how little any of us know of the real internal state even of those whom we see most frequently; for the truth is, that he was then depressed by poverty, and irritated by disease. When Boswell mentioned to him this account, as given him by Dr. Adams, he said, "Ah, sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority."

On a visit to Oxford, three-and-twenty years after he had left it, he waited on the master of his old college, Dr. Radcliffe, who received him very coldly. Johnson at least expected that the master would order a copy of his Dictionary, now near publication; but the master did not choose to talk on the subject, and never asked Johnson to dine, or even to visit him, while he stayed at Oxford. After he had left the lodgings, Johnson said to Mr. Warton, who had accompanied him, "*There lives a man who lives by the revenues of literature, and will not move a finger to support it. If I come to live at Oxford, I shall take up my abode at Trinity.*" They then called on the Rev. Mr. Meeke, one of the fellows, and of Johnson's standing. Here was a most cordial greeting on both sides. On leaving him, Johnson said, "I used to think Meeke had excellent parts, when we were boys together at the college; but, alas!

'Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!—'

"I remember, at the classical lecture in the hall, I could not bear Meeke's superiority, and I tried to sit as far from him as I could, that I might not hear him construe. About the same time of life, Meeke was left behind at Oxford to feed on a fellowship, and I went to London to get my living: now, sir, see the difference of our literary characters!"

As they were leaving the college, he said, "Here I translated Pope's Messiah. Which do you think is the best line in it? My own favourite is,

'*Vallis aromaticas fundit Saronica nubes.*'"

Warton told him, he thought it a very sonorous hexameter ; but did not tell him it was not in the Virgilian style.

He much regretted that his first tutor was dead, for whom he seemed to retain the greatest regard. He said, " I once had been a whole morning sliding in Christ Church meadows, and missed his lecture in logic. After dinner, he sent for me to his room. I expected a sharp rebuke for my idleness, and went with a beating heart. When we were seated, he told me he had sent for me to drink a glass of wine with him, and to tell me he was *not* angry with me for missing his lecture. This was, in fact, a most severe reprimand. Some more of the boys were then sent for, and we spent a very pleasant afternoon."

At another time Johnson expatiated on the advantages of Oxford for learning. " There is here, sir, such a progressive emulation : the students are anxious to appear well to their tutors ; the tutors are anxious to have their pupils appear well in the college ; the colleges are anxious to have their students appear well in the university ; and there are excellent rules of discipline in every college. That the rules are sometimes ill observed, may be true—but is nothing against the system. The members of an university may, for a season, be unmindful of their duty. I am arguing for the excellence of the institution."

On Boswell's observing to him that some of the *modern* libraries of the university were more commodious and pleasant for study, as being more spacious and airy, he replied, " Sir, if a man has a mind to

*prance*, he must study at Christ Church and All Souls."

Somebody found fault with writing verses in a dead language, maintaining that they were merely arrangements of so many words; and laughed at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, for sending forth collections of them, not only in Greek and Latin, but even in Syriac, Arabic, and other more unknown tongues. JOHNSON. "I would have as many of these as possible: I would have verses in every language that there are the means of acquiring. Nobody imagines that a university is to have at once two hundred poets; but it should be able to show two hundred scholars. Pierce's death was lamented, I think, in forty languages. And I would have had at every coronation, and every death of a king, every *gaudium*, and every *luctus*, university verses, in as many languages as can be acquired. I would have the world to be thus told, 'Here is a school where every thing may be learned.'"

Boswell introduced the topic, which is often ignorantly urged, that the universities of England are too rich; so that learning does not flourish in them as it would do if those who teach had smaller salaries, and depended on their assiduity for a great part of their income. JOHNSON. "Sir, the very reverse of this is the truth: the English universities are not rich enough. Our fellowships are only sufficient to support a man during his studies to fit him for the world; and, accordingly, in general, they are held no longer than till opportunity offers of getting away. Now and then, perhaps, there is a fellow who grows old in his college; but this is against

his will, unless he be a man very indolent indeed. A hundred á year is reckoned a good fellowship, and that is no more than is necessary to keep a man decently as a scholar. We do not allow our fellows to marry, because we consider academical institutions as preparatory to a settlement in the world. It is only by being employed as a tutor, that a fellow can obtain any thing more than a livelihood. To be sure a man who has enough without teaching, will probably not teach: for we would all be idle if we could. In the same manner, a man who is to get nothing by teaching, will not exert himself. Gresham college was intended as a place of instruction for London; able professors were to read lectures gratis; they contrived to have no scholars; whereas, if they had been allowed to receive but sixpence a lecture from each scholar, they would have been emulous to have had many scholars. Every body will agree that it should be the interest of those who teach to have scholars; and this is the case in our universities. That they are too rich is certainly not true; for they have nothing good enough to keep a man of eminent learning with them for his life. In the foreign universities a professorship is a high thing: it is as much almost as a man can make by his learning; and therefore we find the most learned men abroad are in the universities. It is not so with us. Our universities are impoverished of learning by the penury of their provisions. I wish there were many places of a thousand a year at Oxford, to keep first-rate men of learning from quitting the university." Undoubtedly, if this were the case, literature would have a

still greater dignity and splendour at Oxford, and there would be grander living sources of instruction.

Talking of the education of children, Boswell asked him what he thought was best to teach first. JOHNSON. "Sir, it is no matter what you teach them first, any more than what leg you shall put into your breeches first : sir, you may stand disputing which is best to put in first, but in the mean time your breech is bare. Sir, while you are considering which of the two things you should teach your child first, another boy has learned them both."

Going in a boat from the Temple to Greenwich, Boswell asked Dr. Johnson if he really thought a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages an essential requisite to a good education. JOHNSON. "Most certainly, sir ; for those who know them have a very great advantage over those who do not. Nay, sir, it is wonderful what a difference learning makes upon people even in the common intercourse of life, which does not appear to be much connected with it." BOSWELL. "And yet people go through the world very well, and carry on the business of life to good advantage, without learning." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use ; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning, as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors." He then called to the boy, "What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?" "Sir," said the boy, "I would give what I have." Johnson was much pleased with his answer, and we gave him a double fare. Dr. Johnson then turning to Boswell, said, "Sir, a de-

sire of knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind ; and every human being, whose mind is not debauched, will be willing to give all that he has to get knowledge."

He said of Garrick : " He has not Latin enough. He finds out the Latin by the meaning rather than the meaning by the Latin."

He once remarked he had known several good scholars among the Irish gentlemen, but scarcely any of them correct in *quantity*. He extended the same observation to Scotland.

Of a schoolmaster of his acquaintance, a native of Scotland, he said, " He has a great deal of good about him ; but he is also very defective in some respects. His inner part is good, but his outer part is mighty awkward. You in Scotland do not attain that nice critical skill in languages which we get in our schools in England. I would not put a boy to him, whom I intended for a man of learning : but for the sons of citizens, who are to learn a little, get good morals, and then go to trade, he may do very well."

Boswell once asked him whether a person, whose name he had then forgotten, studied hard ; he answered, " No, sir, I do not believe he studied hard. I never knew a man who studied hard. I conclude, indeed, from the effects, that some men have studied hard, as Bentley and Clarke."

He observed, " idleness is a disease that must be combated ; but I would not advise a rigid adherence to a particular plan of study. I myself have never persisted in any plan for two days together. A man ought to read just as inclination leads him ; for what he reads as a task will do him little good. A

young man should read five hours in a day, and so may acquire a great deal of knowledge."

He said, "for general improvement, a man should read whatever his immediate inclination prompts him to; though to be sure, if a man has a science to learn, he must regularly and resolutely advance. What we read with inclination makes a stronger impression. If we read without inclination, half the mind is employed in fixing the attention, so there is but half to be employed on what we read. I read Fielding's *Amelia* through, without stopping.\* If a man begins to read in the middle of a book, and feels an inclination to go on, let him not quit it to go to the beginning. He may perhaps not feel again the inclination."

Of application, he remarked, "Sir, in my early years I read very hard. It is a sad reflection, but a true one, that I knew almost as much at eighteen as I do now.† My judgment, to be sure, was not so good; but I had all the facts. I remember very well, when I was at Oxford, an old gentleman said

\* Johnson appears to have been particularly pleased with the character of the heroine of this novel. "His attention to veracity," says Mrs. Piozzi, "was; without equal or example; and when I mentioned *Clarissa* as a perfect character, 'On the contrary,' said he, 'you may observe there is always something which she prefers to truth.' 'Fielding's *Amelia* was the most pleasing heroine of all the romances,' he said, 'but that vile broken nose, never cured, ruined the sale of perhaps the only book, which being printed off [published] betimes one morning, a new edition was called for before night.'"—*Anecdotes*, p. 221.

† His great period of study was from the age of twelve to that of eighteen, as he told Mr. Langton, who gave me this information.—*Malone*.



to me, 'Young man, ply your book diligently, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task.' And, on another occasion, 'Much may be done if a man puts his whole mind to a particular object: by so doing, sir Fletcher Norton has made himself the great lawyer he is allowed to be.'

A schoolmaster in Scotland was, by a court of inferior jurisdiction, deprived of his office, for being somewhat severe in the chastisement of his scholars. The court of session, considering it to be dangerous to the interest of learning and education to lessen the dignity of teachers, and make them afraid of too indulgent parents, instigated by the complaints of their children, restored him. His enemies appealed to the house of lords, though the salary was only twenty pounds a year.

Mr. Boswell was the schoolmaster's counsel on the occasion, and wrote to Dr. Johnson on the subject. On his arrival in London, the doctor received him with a hearty welcome; saying, "I am glad you are come upon such an errand:" alluding to the cause of the schoolmaster. BOSWELL. "I hope, sir, he will be in no danger. It is a very delicate matter to interfere between a master and his scholars: nor do I see how you can fix the degree of severity that a master may use." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, till you can fix the degree of obstinacy and negligence of the scholars, you cannot fix the degree of severity of the master. Severity must be continued till obstinacy be subdued, and negligence be cured." On a subsequent day he dictated the following arguments on the subject.

“The charge is, that he has used immoderate and cruel correction. Correction, in itself, is not cruel: children, being not reasonable, can be governed only by fear. To impress this fear, is therefore one of the first duties of those who have the care of children. It is the duty of a parent, and has never been thought inconsistent with parental tenderness. It is the duty of a master, who is in his highest exaltation when he is *loco parentis*. Yet, as good things become evil by excess, correction, by being immoderate, may become cruel. But when is correction immoderate? When it is more frequent or more severe than is required *ad monendum et docendum*, for reformation and instruction. No severity is cruel, which obstinacy makes necessary; for the greatest cruelty would be, to desist, and leave the scholar too careless for instruction, and too much hardened for reproof. Locke, in his treatise of Education, mentions a mother, with applause, who whipped an infant eight times before she had subdued it; for had she stopped at the seventh act of correction, her daughter, says he, would have been ruined. The degrees of obstinacy in young minds are very different: as different must be the degrees of persevering severity. A stubborn scholar must be corrected till he is subdued. The discipline of a school is military. There must be either unbounded licence or absolute authority. The master who punishes, not only consults the future happiness of him who is the immediate subject of correction, but he propagates obedience through the whole school; and establishes regularity by exemplary justice. The victorious obstinacy of a single boy would make his future endeavours of reformation

or instruction totally ineffectual. Obstinacy, therefore, must never be victorious. Yet it is well known, that there sometimes occurs a sullen and hardy resolution, that laughs at all common punishment, and bids defiance to all common degrees of pain. Correction must be proportioned to occasions. The flexible will be reformed by gentle discipline, and the refractory must be subdued by harsher methods. The degrees of scholastic, as of military punishment, no stated rules can ascertain. It must be enforced till it overpowers temptation ; till stubbornness becomes flexible, and perverseness regular. Custom and reason have, indeed, set some bounds to scholastic penalties. The schoolmaster inflicts no capital punishments, nor enforces his edicts by either death or mutilation. The civil law has wisely determined, that a master who strikes at a scholar's eye shall be considered as criminal. But punishments, however severe, that produce no lasting evil, may be just and reasonable, because they may be necessary. Such have been the punishments used by the respondent. No scholar has gone from him either blind or lame, or with any of his limbs or powers injured or impaired. They were irregular, and he punished them : they were obstinate, and he enforced his punishment. But however provoked, he never exceeded the limits of moderation, for he inflicted nothing beyond present pain : and how much of that was required, no man is so little able to determine as those who have determined against him—the parents of the offenders. It has been said, that he used unprecedented and improper instruments of correction. Of this accusation the meaning is not very easy to be found. No instru-

ment of correction is more proper than another, but as it is better adapted to produce present pain without lasting mischief. Whatever were his instruments, no lasting mischief has ensued; and therefore, however unusual, in hands so cautious they were proper. It has been objected, that the respondent admits the charge of cruelty, by producing no evidence to confute it. Let it be considered, that his scholars are either dispersed at large in the world, or continue to inhabit the place in which they were bred. Those who are dispersed cannot be found; those who remain are the sons of his prosecutors, and are not likely to support a man to whom their fathers are enemies. If it be supposed that the enmity of their fathers proves the justness of the charge, it must be considered how often experience shows us that men who are angry on one ground will accuse on another; with how little kindness, in a town of low trade, a man who lives by learning is regarded; and how implicitly, where the inhabitants are not very rich, a rich man is hearkened to and followed. In a place like Campbelltown, it is easy for one of the principal inhabitants to make a party. It is easy for that party to heat themselves with imaginary grievances. It is easy for them to oppress a man poorer than themselves; and natural to assert the dignity of riches, by persisting in oppression. The argument which attempts to prove the impropriety of restoring him to the school, by alleging that he has lost the confidence of the people, is not the subject of juridical consideration; for he is to suffer, if he must suffer, not for their judgment, but for his own actions. It may be convenient for them to have another ma-

ster ; but it is a convenience of their own making. It would be likewise convenient for him to find another school ; but this convenience he cannot obtain. The question is not what is now convenient, but what is generally right. If the people of Campbelltown be distressed by the restoration of the respondent, they are distressed only by their own fault ; by turbulent passions and unreasonable desires ; by tyranny, which law has defeated, and by malice, which virtue has surmounted.

“ This, sir, you are to turn in your mind, and make the best use of it you can in your speech.”

The decree of the court of session however was reversed in the house of lords, after a very eloquent speech by lord Mansfield, who showed himself an adept in school discipline.

Johnson was partial to public schools and old modes. He observed, “ more is learned in public than in private schools, from emulation : there is the collision of mind with mind, or the radiation of many minds pointing to one centre. Though few boys make their own exercises, yet if a good exercise is given up, out of a great number of boys, it is made by somebody.”

“ I hate by-roads in education. Education is as well known, and has long been as well known, as ever it can be. Endeavouring to make children prematurely wise is useless labour. Suppose they have more knowledge at five or six years old than other children, what use can be made of it ? It will be lost before it is wanted, and the waste of so much time and labour of the teacher can never be repaid. Too much is expected from precocity, and too little performed. Miss \* \* \* was an instance of

early cultivation; but in what did it terminate? In marrying a little Presbyterian parson who keeps an infant boarding-school; so that all her employment now is

‘ To suckle fools, and chronicle small-beer.’

She tells the children, ‘ This is a cat, and that is a dog, with four legs and a tail; see there! you are much better than a cat or a dog, for you can speak.’ If I had bestowed such an education on a daughter, and had discovered that she thought of marrying such a fellow, I would have sent her to the *Congress*.”

He advised not to *refine* in the education of children, “ Life,” said he, “ will not bear refinement; you must do as other people do.”

He allowed very great influence to education. “ I do not deny, sir, but there is some original difference in minds; but it is nothing in comparison of what is formed by education. We may instance the science of *numbers*, which all minds are equally capable of attaining: yet we find a prodigious difference in the powers of different men, in that respect, after they are grown up, because their minds have been more or less exercised in it: and I think the same cause will explain the difference of excellence in other things, gradations admitting always some difference in the first principles.”

Mr. Langton said, he was about to establish a school upon his estate, but it had been suggested to him, that it might have a tendency to make the people less industrious. JOHNSON. “ No, sir:

while learning to read and write is a distinction, the few who have that distinction may be the less inclined to work; but when every body learns to read and write, it is no longer a distinction. A man who has a laced waistcoat is too fine a man to work; but if every body had laced waistcoats, we should have people working in laced waistcoats: There are no people whatever more industrious, none who work more, than our manufacturers; yet they have all learned to read and write. Sir, you must not neglect doing a thing immediately good, from fear of remote evil; from fear of its being abused. A man who has candles may sit up too late, which he would not do if he had not candles; but nobody will deny that the art of making candles, by which light is continued to us beyond the time that the sun gives us light, is a valuable art, and ought to be preserved." BOSWELL. "But, sir, would it not be better to follow nature, and go to bed and rise just as nature gives us light or withholds it?" JOHNSON. "No, sir; for then we should have no kind of equality in the partition of our time between sleeping and waking. It would be very different in different seasons and in different places. In some of the northern parts of Scotland how little light is there in the depth of winter!"

No. II.

KNOWLEDGE.

JOHNSON said: "Mankind have a great aversion to intellectual labour; but even supposing knowledge to be easily attainable, more people would be content to be ignorant than would take even a little trouble to acquire it."

Goldsmith attempting to maintain, from an affectation of paradox, "that knowledge was not desirable on its own account, for it was often a source of unhappiness." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, that knowledge may, in some cases, produce unhappiness, I allow. But, upon the whole, knowledge, *per se*, is certainly an object which every man would wish to attain, although, perhaps, he may not take the trouble necessary for attaining it."

Talking of a young man who was uneasy from thinking that he was very deficient in learning and knowledge, he said, "A man has no reason to complain who holds a middle place, and has many below him; and perhaps he has not six of his years above him; perhaps not one. Though he may not know any thing perfectly, the general mass of knowledge he has acquired is considerable. Time will do for him all that is wanting."

Dr. Johnson said one evening to Boswell: "You have now lived five-and-twenty years, and you have employed them well." BOSWELL. "Alas, sir," said he, "I fear not. Do I know history? Do I know mathematics? Do I know law?" JOHN-



SON. "Why, sir, though you may know no science so well as to be able to teach it, and no profession so well as to be able to follow it, your general mass of knowledge of books and men renders you very capable to make yourself master of any science, or fit yourself for any profession."

He attacked lord Monboddos's strange speculation on the primitive state of human nature; observing, "Sir, it is all conjecture about a thing useless, even were it known to be true. Knowledge of all kinds is good. Conjecture, as to things useful, is good; but conjecture as to what it would be useless to know, such as whether men went upon all four, is very idle."

He observed, "All knowledge is of itself of some value. There is nothing so minute or inconsiderable, that I would not rather know it than not. In the same manner, all power, of whatever sort, is of itself desirable. A man would not submit to learn to hem a ruffle, of his wife, or his wife's maid; but if a mere wish could attain it, he would rather wish to be able to hem a ruffle."

He took occasion to enlarge on the advantages of reading, and combated the idle superficial notion, that knowledge enough may be acquired in conversation. "The foundation," said he, "must be laid by reading. General principles must be had from books, which, however, must be brought to the test of real life. In conversation you never get a system. What is said upon a subject is to be gathered from a hundred people. The parts of a truth, which a man gets thus, are at such a distance from each other that he never attains to a full view."

Dr. Johnson advised Boswell to have as many books about him as he could; that he might read upon any subject upon which he had a desire for instruction at the time. "What you read *then*," said he, "you will remember; but if you have not a book immediately ready, and the subject moulds in your mind, it is a chance if you have again a desire to study it. If a man never has an eager desire for instruction, he should prescribe a task for himself: but it is better when a man reads from immediate inclination. Snatches of reading indeed will not make a Bentley or a Clarke: they are, however, in a certain degree, advantageous. I would put a child into a library (where no unfit books are) and let him read at his choice. A child should not be discouraged from reading any thing that he takes a liking to, from a notion that it is above his reach. If that be the case, the child will soon find it out and desist; if not, he of course gains the instruction; which is so much the more likely to come, from the inclination with which he takes up the study."

Boswell asked Johnson, whether a man's being forward to make himself known to eminent people, and seeing as much of life, and getting as much information as he could in every way, was not yet lessening himself by his forwardness. JOHNSON. "No, sir; a man always makes himself greater as he increases his knowledge."

On Boswell's expressing his wonder at his discovering so much of the knowledge peculiar to different professions, he told him, "I learned what I know of law chiefly from Ballow, a very able man: I learned some too from Chambers; but was not

so teachable then. One is not willing to be taught by a young man." When Boswell expressed a wish to know more about Mr. Ballow, Johnson said, "Sir, I have seen him but once these twenty years. The tide of life has driven us different ways." In fact, whoever quits the creeks of private connexions, and fairly gets into the great ocean of London, will, by imperceptible degrees, unavoidably experience such cessations of acquaintance. "My knowledge of physic," he added, "I learned from Dr. James, whom I helped in writing the proposals for his Dictionary, and also a little in the Dictionary itself. I also learned from Dr. Lawrence; but was then grown more stubborn."

A gentleman maintained, that a general diffusion of knowledge among a people was a disadvantage, for it made the vulgar rise above their humble sphere. JOHNSON. "Sir, while knowledge is a distinction, those who are possessed of it will naturally rise above those who are not. Merely to read and write was a distinction at first; but we see, when reading and writing have become general, the common people keep their stations. And so, were higher attainments to become general, the effect would be the same."

On deficiency of knowledge, Johnson observed, "It is amazing what ignorance of certain points one sometimes finds in men of eminence. A wit about town, who wrote Latin bawdy verses, asked me, how it happened that England and Scotland, which were once two nations, were now one:—and sir Fletcher Norton did not seem to know that there were such publications as the Reviews."

## No. III.

## MAN.

JOHNSON and an Irish gentleman got into a dispute concerning the cause of some part of mankind being black. "Why, sir," said Johnson, "it has been accounted for in three ways: either by supposing that they are the posterity of Ham, who was cursed; or that God at first created two kinds of men, one black and another white; or that by the heat of the sun the skin is scorched, and so acquires a sooty hue. This matter has been much canvassed among naturalists, but has never been brought to any certain issue."

On a very rainy night Boswell made some common-place observations on the relaxation of nerves and depression of spirits which such weather occasioned; \* adding, however, that it was good for the vegetable creation. Johnson, who systematically denied that the temperature of the air had any influence on the human frame, answered, with a smile of ridicule, "Why, yes, sir, it is good for vegetables, and for the animals who eat those vegetables, and for the animals who eat those animals."

At another time, on a very wet day, Boswell again complained of the disagreeable effects of such weather. JOHNSON. "Sir, this is all imagination,

\* Johnson would suffer none of his friends to fill up chasms in conversation with remarks on the weather. "Let us, not talk of the weather." Burney.

which physicians encourage ; for man lives in air, as fish lives in water ; so that if the atmosphere press heavy from above, there is equal resistance from below. To be sure bad weather is hard upon people who are obliged to be abroad ; and men cannot labour so well in the open air in bad weather, as in good ; but, sir, a smith or a tailor, whose work is within doors, will surely do as much in rainy weather as in fair. Some delicate frames, indeed, may be affected by wet weather ; but not common constitutions."

Subsequently, however, when seventy-five, Johnson wrote to Dr. Burney : " The weather, you know, has not been balmy ; I am now reduced to think, and am at last reduced to talk, of the weather. Pride must have a fall."

Talking of our feeling for the distresses of others : JOHNSON. " Why, sir, there is much noise made about it, but it is greatly exaggerated. No, sir, we have a certain degree of feeling to prompt us to do good ; more than that Providence does not intend. It would be misery to no purpose." BOSWELL. " But suppose now, sir, that one of your intimate friends were apprehended for an offence for which he might be hanged." JOHNSON. " I should do what I could to bail him, and give him any other assistance ; but if he were once fairly hanged, I should not suffer." BOSWELL. " Would you eat your dinner that day, sir?" JOHNSON. " Yes, sir, and eat it as if he were eating with me. Why, there's Baretti, who is to be tried for his life to-morrow : friends have risen up for him on every side ; yet if he should be hanged, none of them will eat a slice of plum-pudding the less. Sir, that sympathetic

feeling goes a very little way in depressing the mind." BOSWELL. "I dined lately at Foote's, who showed me a letter, which he had received from Tom Davies, telling him, that he had not been able to sleep from the concern he felt on account of *this said affair* of Baretti, begging of him to try if he could suggest any thing that might be of service, and at the same time recommending to him an industrious young man who kept a pickle-shop."

JOHNSON. "Ay, sir, here you have a specimen of human sympathy; a friend hanged, and a cucumber pickled. We know not whether Baretti or the pickle man kept Davies from sleep; nor does he know himself. And as to his not sleeping, sir, Tom Davies is a very great man: Tom has been upon the stage, and knows how to do those things; I have not been upon the stage, and cannot do those things." BOSWELL. "I have often blamed myself, sir, for not feeling for others as sensibly as many say they do." JOHNSON. "Sir, don't be duped by them any more. You will find these very feeling people are not very ready to do you good. They *pay* you by *feeling*."

On another occasion, he said, "Pity is not natural to man. Children are always cruel. Savages are always cruel. Pity is acquired and improved by the cultivation of reason. We may have uneasy sensations from seeing a creature in distress, without pity; for we have not pity unless we wish to relieve them. When I am on my way to dine with a friend, and finding it late, have bid the coachman make haste, if I happen to attend when he whips his horses, I may feel unpleasantly that the ani-

mals are put to pain, but I do not wish him to desist. No, sir, I wish him to drive on."

Yet the reverend Dr. Maxwell of Ireland, some time assistant preacher at the Temple, and for many years the social friend of Johnson, said of him, "His philosophy, though austere and solemn, was by no means morose and cynical, and never blunted the laudable sensibilities of his character, or exempted him from the influence of the tender passions. Want of tenderness, he always alleged, was want of parts, and was no less a proof of stupidity than of depravity."

Speaking of a certain prelate, who exerted himself very laudably in building churches and parsonage-houses; "however," said he, "I do not find that he is esteemed a man of such professional learning, or a liberal patron of it; yet it is well where a man possesses any strong positive excellence. Few have all kinds of merit belonging to their character. We must not examine matters too deeply—No, sir, *a fallible being will fail somewhere.*"

He observed, it was a most mortifying reflection for any man to consider *what he had done*, compared with what *he might have done*.

He also said, that so many objections might be made to every thing, that nothing could overcome them: but the necessity of doing something. No man would be of any profession, as simply opposed to not being of it; but every one must do something.

On another occasion, however, he made the common remark on the unhappiness which men who

have led a busy life experience, when they retire in expectation of enjoying themselves at ease; and that they generally languish for want of their habitual occupation, and wish to return to it. He mentioned as strong an instance of this as can well be imagined. "An eminent tallow-chandler in London, who had acquired a considerable fortune, gave up the trade in favour of his foreman, and went to live at a country-house near town. He soon grew weary, and paid frequent visits to his old shop, where he desired they might let him know their *melting-days*, and he would come and assist them; which he accordingly did. Here, sir, was a man, to whom the most disgusting circumstances in the business to which he had been used, was a relief from idleness."

He said, mankind have a strong attachment to the habitations to which they have been accustomed. "You see the inhabitants of Norway do not, with one consent, quit it, and go to some part of America, where there is a mild climate, and where they may have the same produce from land with the tenth part of labour. No, sir, their affection for their old dwellings, and the terror of a general change, keep them at home. Thus we see many of the finest spots in the world thinly inhabited, and many rugged spots well inhabited."

Boswell mentioned a friend of his who had resided long in Spain, and was unwilling to return to Britain. JOHNSON. "Sir, he is attached to some woman." BOSWELL. "I rather believe, sir, it is the fine climate that keeps him there." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, how can you talk so? What is *climate* to happiness? Place me in the heart of Asia,



should I not be exiled? What proportion does climate bear to the complete system of human life? You may advise me to go to live at Bologna to eat sausages. The sausages there are the best in the world; they lose much by being carried."

He observed, a principal source of erroneous judgment was viewing things partially, and only on *one side*: as, for instance, *fortune-hunters*, when they contemplated the fortunes *singly* and *separately*, it was a dazzling and tempting object; but when they came to possess the wives and the fortunes *together*, they began to suspect they had not made quite so good a bargain.

Boswell gave him an account of the excellent mimicry of a friend of his in Scotland; observing, at the same time, that some people thought it a very mean thing. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, it is making a very mean use of man's powers. But to be a good mimic, requires great powers; great acuteness of observation, great retention of what is observed, and great pliancy of organs, to represent what is observed. I remember a lady of quality of this town, lady \* \* \* \* \*, who was a wonderful mimic, and used to make me laugh immoderately. I have heard she is now gone mad." BOSWELL. "It is amazing how a mimic can not only give you the gestures and voice of a person whom he represents, but even what a person would say on any particular subject." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, you are to consider that the manner and some particular phrases of a person do much to impress you with an idea of him; and you are not sure that he would say what the mimic says in his character." BOSWELL. "I don't think Foote a good mimic, sir." JOHNSON.

"No, sir; his imitations are not like. He gives you something different from himself, but not the character which he means to assume. He goes out of himself, without going into other people. He cannot take off any person unless he is strongly marked, such as George Faulkner. He is like a painter who can draw the portrait of a man who has a wen upon his face, and who therefore is easily known. If a man hops upon one leg, Foote can hop upon one leg: but he has not that nice discrimination which your friend seems to possess. Foote is, however, very entertaining with a kind of conversation between wit and buffoonery."

When Boswell told him he had been to see a person of the name of Johnson ride upon three horses, he said, "Such a man, sir, should be encouraged; for his performances show the extent of the human powers in one instance, and thus tend to raise our opinion of the faculty of man. He shows what may be attained by persevering application; so that every man may hope, that by giving as much application, although perhaps he may never ride three horses at a time, or dance upon a wire, yet he may be equally expert in whatever profession he has chosen to pursue."

On Sunday, April 19, being Easter-day, general Paoli and Boswell paid him a visit before dinner. They talked of the notion that blind persons can distinguish colours by their touch. JOHNSON. "Professor Saunderson mentions his having attempted to do it, but found he was aiming at an impossibility: to be sure a difference in the surface makes the difference of colours; but that difference is so fine, that it is not sensible to the touch." PAOLI.

"But jugglers and fraudulent gamesters know cards by the touch." JOHNSON. "The cards used by such persons must be less polished than ours commonly are."

They then talked of sounds. PAOLI. "There is no beauty in a simple sound, but only in an harmonious composition of sounds." BOSWELL. "I must beg leave to differ from you, general. Surely there is beauty in the soft and sweet sound of a fine woman's voice." JOHNSON. "No, sir, if a serpent or a toad uttered it, you would think it ugly." BOSWELL. "So you would think, sir, if a beautiful tune were uttered by one of those animals." JOHNSON. "No, sir, it would be admired. We have seen fine fiddlers whom we liked as little as toads." (*laughing.*)

A literary lady of large fortune was mentioned as one who did good to many, but by no means "by stealth;" and instead of "blushing to find it fame," acted evidently from vanity. JOHNSON. "I have seen no beings who do as much good from benevolence, as she does from whatever motive. If there are such under the earth, or in the clouds, I wish they would come up, or come down. What Soame Jenyns says upon this subject is not to be minded; he is a wit. No, sir, to act from pure benevolence is not possible for finite beings. Human benevolence is mingled with vanity, interest, or some other motive."

Of the difference between man and woman, he said, "Where there is no education, as in savage countries, men will have the upper hand of women. Bodily strength, no doubt, contributes to this; but it would be so, exclusive of that; for it is mind that

always governs. When it comes to dry understanding, man has the better."

Even between men it is much the same. "Though many men are nominally entrusted with the administration of hospitals and other public institutions, almost all the good is done by one man, by whom the rest are driven on; owing to confidence in him, and indolence in them."

A gentleman talked of retiring from office. "Never think of that," said Johnson. The gentleman urged, "I should then do no ill." JOHNSON. "Nor no good either. Sir, it would be a civil suicide."

On the common topic, whether mankind in general have grown worse or better, the following dialogue took place between Johnson and some friends.

E. "From the experience which I have had—and I have had a great deal—I have learnt to think *better* of mankind."

JOHNSON. "From my experience, I have found them worse in commercial dealings, more disposed to cheat, than I had any notion of; but more disposed to do one another good than I had conceived."

I. "Less just, and more beneficent."

JOHNSON. "And really it is wonderful, considering how much attention is necessary for men to take care of themselves, and ward off immediate evils which press upon them—it is wonderful how much they do for others. As it is said of the greatest liar, that he tells more truth than falsehood; so it may be said of the worst man, that he does more good than evil."

BOSWELL. "Perhaps from experience men may be found *happier* than we suppose."

JOHNSON. "No, sir; the more we inquire we shall find men less happy."

P. "As to thinking better or worse of mankind from experience, some cunning people will not be satisfied unless they have put men to the test, as they think. There is a very good story told of sir Godfrey Kneller, in his character of a justice of the peace. A gentleman brought his servant before him, upon an accusation of having stolen some money from him; but it having come out that he had laid it purposely in the servant's way, in order to try his honesty, sir Godfrey sent the master to prison."

JOHNSON. "To resist temptation once is not a sufficient proof of honesty. If a servant, indeed, were to resist the continued temptation of silver lying in a window, as some people let it lie, when he is sure his master does not know how much there is of it, he would give a strong proof of honesty. But this is a proof to which you have no right to put a man. You know, humanly speaking, there is a certain degree of temptation which will overcome any virtue. Now, in so far as you approach temptation to a man, you do him an injury; and, if he is overcome, you share his guilt."

P. "And when once overcome, it is easier for him to be got the better of again."

BOSWELL. "Yes, you are his seducer; you have debauched him. I have known a man resolve to put friendship to the test, by asking a friend to lend him money, merely with that view, when he did not want it."

**JOHNSON.** "That is very wrong, sir. Your friend may be a narrow man, and yet have many good qualities : narrowness may be his only fault. Now you are trying his general character as a friend by one particular singly, in which he happens to be defective ; when in truth his character is composed of many particulars."

## No. IV.

## MELANCHOLY.

**JOHNSON** once mentioned to **Boswell**, that he had been distressed by melancholy, and for this reason had been obliged to fly from study and meditation, to the dissipating variety of life. Against melancholy he recommended constant occupation of mind, a great deal of exercise, moderation in eating and drinking, and especially to shun drinking at night. He said, melancholy people were apt to fly to intemperance for relief, but that it sunk them much deeper in misery. He observed, that labouring men, who work hard, and live sparingly, are seldom or never troubled with low spirits.

**Boswell** often teased him with fanciful apprehensions of unhappiness. A moth having fluttered round the candle, and burnt itself, he laid hold of this little incident to admonish him ; saying, with a sly look, and in a solemn but a quiet tone, "That creature was its own tormentor, and I believe its name was **BOSWELL**."

Talking of constitutional melancholy, he observed, "A man so afflicted, sir, must divert dis-

tressing thoughts, and not combat with them."

BOSWELL. "May not he think them down, sir?"

JOHNSON. "No, sir: to attempt to *think them down* is madness. He should have a lamp constantly burning in his bed chamber during the night, and if wakefully disturbed, take a book, and read, and compose himself to rest. To have the management of the mind is a great art; it may be attained in a considerable degree by experience and habitual exercise." BOSWELL. "Should not he provide amusements for himself? Would it not, for instance, be right for him to take a course of chymistry?"

JOHNSON. "Let him take a course of chymistry, or a course of rope-dancing, or a course of any thing to which he is inclined at the time: let him contrive to have as many retreats for his mind as he can, as many things to which it can fly from itself. Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* is a valuable work. It is perhaps overloaded with quotation: but there is great spirit and great power in what Burton says, when he writes from his own mind."

Johnson lamented to Mr. Hector the state of one of their school-fellows, Mr. Charles Congreve, a clergyman, which he thus described. "He obtained, I believe, considerable preferment in Ireland, but now lives in London, quite as a valetudinarian, afraid to go into any house but his own. He takes a short airing in his post-chaise every day. He has an elderly woman, whom he calls cousin, who lives with him, and jogs his elbow when his glass has stood too long empty; and encourages him in drinking, in which he is very willing to be encouraged: not that he gets drunk, for he is very pious man,

but he is always muddy. He confesses to one bottle of port every day, and he probably drinks more. He is quite unsocial; his conversation is quite monosyllabical; and when, at my last visit, I asked him what o'clock it was; that signal of my departure had so pleasing an effect on him, that he sprung up to look at his watch like a greyhound bounding at a hare." When Johnson took leave of Mr. Hector, he said, "Don't grow like Congreve; nor let me grow like him, when you are near me."

He gave Dr. Taylor the same sad account of their school-fellow, Congreve, that he had given to Mr. Hector; adding a remark of such moment to the rational conduct of a man in the decline of life, that deserves to be imprinted upon every mind: "There is nothing against which an old man should be so much upon his guard as putting himself to nurse." Innumerable have been the melancholy instances of men, once distinguished for firmness, resolution, and spirit, who, in their latter days, have been governed, like children, by interested female artifice.

Another time, talking of melancholy, he said, "Some men, and very thinking men too, have not those vexing thoughts. Sir Joshua Reynolds is the same all the year round. Beauchamp, except when ill and in pain, is the same. But I believe most men have them in the degree in which they are capable of having them. If I were in the country, and were distressed by that malady, I would force myself to take a book; and every time I did it I should find it the easier. Melancholy, indeed, should be diverted by every means but drinking."



## No. V.

## MADNESS.

JOHNSON said, "A madman loves to be with people whom he fears; not as a dog fears the lash, but of whom he stands in awe." Boswell remarks, "I was struck with the justice of this observation. To be with those of whom a person, whose mind is wavering and dejected, stands in awe, represses and composes an uneasy tumult of spirits, and consoles him with the contemplation of something steady, and at least comparatively great."

Johnson added, "Madmen are all sensual in the lower stages of the distemper. They are eager for gratifications to soothe their minds, and divert their attention from the misery which they suffer: but when they grow very ill, pleasure is too weak for them, and they seek for pain. Employment, sir, and hardships, prevent melancholy. I suppose in all our army in America, there was not one man who went mad."

On another occasion he observed, "Madness frequently discovers itself merely by unnecessary deviation from the usual modes of the world. My poor friend Smart showed the disturbance of his mind, by falling upon his knees, and saying his prayers in the street, or in any unusual place. Now, although, rationally speaking, it is greater madness not to pray at all, than to pray as Smart did, I am afraid there are so many who do not

pray, that their understanding is not called in question."

Concerning this unfortunate poet, Christopher Smart, who was confined in a mad-house, he had, at another time, the following conversation with Dr. Burney. BURNAY. "How does poor Smart do, sir? is he likely to recover?" JOHNSON. "It seems as if his mind had ceased to struggle with the disease; for he grows fat upon it." BURNAY. "Perhaps, sir, that may be from want of exercise." JOHNSON. "No, sir; he has partly as much exercise as he used to have, for he digs in the garden. Indeed before his confinement, he used, for exercise, to walk to the ale-house; but he was *carried* back again. I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society. He insisted on people praying with him; and I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as any one else. Another charge was, that he did not love clean linen; and I have no passion for it."

Talking of the melancholy end of a gentleman who had destroyed himself. JOHNSON. "It was owing to imaginary difficulties in his affairs, which, had he talked of with any friend, would soon have vanished." BOSWELL. "Do you think, sir, that all who commit suicide are mad?" JOHNSON. "Sir, they are often not universally disordered in their intellects; but one passion presses so upon them, that they yield to it, and commit suicide, as a passionate man will stab another. I have often thought, that after a man has taken the resolution to kill himself, it is not courage in him to do any thing, however desperate, because he has nothing to fear." GOLDSMITH. "I don't see that." JOHN-

son. "Nay, but my dear sir, why should not you see what every one else sees?" GOLDSMITH. "It is for fear of something that he has resolved to kill himself: and will not that timid disposition restrain him?" JOHNSON. "It does not signify that the fear of something made him resolve; it is upon the state of his mind, after the resolution is taken, that I argue. Suppose a man, either from fear, or pride, or conscience, or whatever motive, has resolved to kill himself; when once the resolution is taken, he has nothing to fear. He may then go and take the king of Prussia by the nose, at the head of his army. He cannot fear the rack, who is resolved to kill himself. When Eustace Budgel was walking down to the Thames, determined to drown himself, he might, if he pleased, without any apprehension of danger, have turned aside, and first set fire to St. James's Palace."

## No. VI.

~~PREJUDICE.~~

JOHNSON'S prejudice against Scotland appeared remarkably strong at times. When Boswell talked of the advancement of the Scotch in literature, "Sir," said he, "you have learnt a little from us, and you think yourselves very great men. Hume would never have written history, had not Voltaire written it before him. He is an echo of Voltaire." BOSWELL. "But, sir, we have lord Kames." JOHNSON. "You have lord Kames. Keep him. Ha! ha! ha! We don't envy you him. Do you ever see

Dr. Robertson?" BOSWELL. "Yes, sir." JOHNSON. "Does the dog talk of me?" BOSWELL. "Indeed, sir, he does, and loves you." Boswell adds: "Thinking that I now had him in a corner, and being solicitous for the literary fame of my country, I pressed him for his opinion on the merit of Dr. Robertson's History of Scotland. But, to my surprise, he escaped. 'Sir, I love Robertson, and I won't talk of his book.' It is but justice, both to him and Dr. Robertson, to add, that though he indulged himself in this sally of wit, he had too good taste not to be fully sensible of the merits of that admirable work."

"He played off his wit against Scotland with a good humoured pleasantry, which gave," says Boswell, "though no bigot to national prejudices, an opportunity for a little contest with him. I having said, that England was obliged to us for gardeners, almost all their good gardeners being Scotchmen: JOHNSON. 'Why, sir, that is because gardening is much more necessary amongst you than with us, which makes so many of your people learn it. It is *all* gardening with you. Things which grow wild here must be cultivated with great care in Scotland. Pray, now,' (throwing himself back in his chair, and laughing) 'are you ever able to bring the sloe to perfection?' "

"I boasted that we had the honour of being the first to abolish the unhospitable, troublesome, and ungracious custom of giving vails to servants. JOHNSON. 'Sir, you abolished vails, because you were too poor to be able to give them.' "

He would not allow Scotland to derive any credit from lord Mansfield; for he was educated in Eng-

land. "Much," said he, "may be made of a Scotchman, if he be *caught* young."

Boswell told him he had been informed by Mr. Orme, that many parts of the East Indies were better mapped than the Highlands of Scotland. JOHNSON. "That a country may be mapped, it must be travelled over." "Nay," said Boswell, meaning to laugh with him at one of his prejudices, "can't you say it is not worth mapping?"

Johnson expressed to his friend Mr. Windham, of Norfolk, his wonder at the extreme jealousy of the Scotch, and their resentment at having their country described by him as it really was; when, to say that it was a country as good as England, would have been a gross falsehood. "None of us," said he, "would be offended, if a foreigner who has travelled here should say, that vines and olives don't grow in England." And as to his prejudice against the Scotch, which Boswell always ascribed to that nationality which he observed in *them*, he said to the same gentleman, "When I find a Scotchman, to whom an Englishman is as a Scotchman, that Scotchman shall be as an Englishman to me." His intimacy with many gentlemen of Scotland, and his employing so many natives of that country as his amanuenses, prove that his prejudice was not virulent; and Boswell has deposited in the British Museum, among other pieces of his writing, the following note, in answer to one from him, asking if he would meet him at dinner at the Mitre, though a friend of his, a Scotchman, was to be there:—"Mr. Johnson does not see why Mr. Boswell should suppose a Scotchman less acceptable than any other man. He will be at the Mitre."

“Johnson told (adds Boswell) of an instance of Scottish nationality, which made a very unfavourable impression upon his mind. A Scotchman, of some consideration in London, solicited him to recommend, by the weight of his learned authority, to be master of an English school, a person of whom he who recommended him confessed he knew no more but that he was his countryman. Johnson was shocked at this unconscientious conduct.

“All the miserable cavillings against his Journey, in newspapers, magazines, and other fugitive publications, I can speak from certain knowledge, only furnished him with sport. At last there came out a scurrilous volume, larger than Johnson's own, filled with malignant abuse, under a name, real or fictitious, of some low man in an obscure corner of Scotland, though supposed to be the work of another Scotchman, who has found means to make himself well known both in Scotland and England. The effect which it had upon Johnson was, to produce this pleasant observation to Mr. Seward, to whom he lent the book: ‘This fellow must be a blockhead. They don't know how to go about their abuse. Who will read a five shilling book against me? No, sir, if they had wit, they should have kept pelting me with pamphlets.’”

On the same subject, Dr. Maxwell says, “Dr. Johnson was often accused of prejudice, nay, antipathy, with regard to the natives of Scotland. Surely, so illiberal a prejudice never entered his mind; and, it is well known, many natives of that country possessed a large share in his esteem; nor were any of them ever excluded from his good offices, as far as opportunity permitted. True it is,

he considered the Scotch, nationally, as a crafty, designing people, eagerly attentive to their own interest, and very apt to overlook the claims and pretensions of other people. 'While they confine their benevolence, in a manner, exclusively to those of their own country, they expect to share in the good offices of other people. Now (said Johnson), this principle is either right or wrong; if right, we should do well to imitate such conduct; if wrong, we cannot too much detest it.' "

But the Scotch were not the people who had most reason to complain of Johnson's prejudices, which his high Tory principles whetted to a great degree of rancour against others; for long before the publication of his *Taxation no Tyranny*, he had indulged the most unfavourable sentiments of his fellow subjects in America. As a proof of this, Dr. Campbell asserts, that as early as 1769, he said of them, "Sir, they are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for any thing we allow them short of hanging."

Thus too, he burst out into a violent declamation against the Corsicans, of whose heroism Boswell talked in high terms. "Sir, what is all this rout about the Corsicans? They have been at war with the Genoese for upwards of twenty years, and have never yet taken their fortified towns. They might have battered down their walls, and reduced them to powder in twenty years. They might have pulled the walls in pieces, and cracked the stones with their teeth, in twenty years." It was in vain to argue with him upon the want of artillery: he was not to be resisted for the moment.

To the prejudices of others, however, he was not

blind ; as when Boswell said " Lord Monboddo still maintains the superiority of the savage life." JOHNSON. " What strange narrowness of mind now is that, to think the things we have not known are better than the things which we have known." BOSWELL. " Why, sir, that is a common prejudice." JOHNSON. " Yes, sir, but a common prejudice should not be found in one whose trade it is to rectify error."

No. VII.

LOVE, FRIENDSHIP, AND AFFECTION.

OF the passion of love he remarked, " Its violence and ill effects are much exaggerated ; who knows any real sufferings on this head, more than from the exorbitancy of any other passion ?"

It being asked whether it was reasonable for a man to be angry at another whom a woman had preferred to him ? JOHNSON. " I do not see, sir, that it is reasonable for a man to be angry with another, whom a woman has preferred to him : but angry he is, no doubt ; and he is loath to be angry with himself."

Dr. Johnson said to Boswell one morning when they were at Birmingham, " You will see, sir, at Mr. Hector's, his sister, Mrs. Careless, a clergyman's widow. She was the first woman with whom I was in love. It dropped out of my head imperceptibly ; but she and I shall always have a kindness for each other." He laughed at the notion that a man can never really be in love but once, and considered it as a mere romantic fancy.



When he again talked of Mrs. Careless at night, he seemed to have had his affection revived ; for he said, " If I had married her, it might have been as happy for me." BOSWELL. " Pray, sir, do you not suppose that there are fifty women in the world, with any one of whom a man may be as happy as with any one woman in particular." JOHNSON. " Ay, sir, fifty thousand." BOSWELL. " Then, sir, you are not of opinion with some, who imagine that certain men and certain women are made for each other ; and that they cannot be happy if they miss their counterparts." JOHNSON. " To be sure not, sir. I believe marriages would in general be as happy, and often more so, if they were all made by the lord chancellor, upon a due consideration of the characters and circumstances, without the parties having any choice in the matter."

A question was started, how far people who disagree in a capital point can live in friendship together. Johnson said they might, Goldsmith said they could not ; as they had not the *idem velle atque idem nolle*—the same likings, and the same aversions. JOHNSON. " Why, sir, you must shun the subject as to which you disagree. For instance, I can live very well with Burke ; I love his knowledge, his genius, his diffusion, and affluence of conversation ; but I would not talk to him of the Rockingham party." GOLDSMITH. " But, sir, when people live together who have something as to which they disagree, and which they want to shun, they will be in the situation mentioned in the story of Bluebeard : ' you may look into all the chambers but one.' But we should have the greatest inclination to look into that chamber—to talk of that subject." JOHNSON. (with a

loud voice,) " Sir, I am not saying that *you* could live in friendship with a man from whom you differ as to some point : I am only saying that *I* could do it. You put me in mind of Sappho, in Ovid." \*

He said to Sir Joshua Reynolds, "If a man does not make new acquaintance as he advances through life, he will soon find himself left alone. A man should keep his friendship in constant repair."

Amid the cold obscurity of Johnson's early life, there was one brilliant circumstance to cheer him : he was well acquainted with Mr. Henry Hervey, one of the branches of the noble family of that name, who had been quartered at Lichfield as an officer of the army, and had at this time a house in London, where Johnson was frequently entertained, and had an opportunity of meeting genteel company. Not very long before his death, he mentioned this; among other particulars of his life; and he described

- \* ' Si, nisi quæ facie poterit te digna videri,  
Nulla futura tua est; nulla futura tua est.'

His meaning, no doubt, was, " If you are determined to associate with no one whose sentiments do not universally coincide with your own, you will, by such a resolution, exclude yourself from all society; for no two men can be found, who, on all points, invariably think alike. So Sappho in Ovid, tells Phaon, that if he will not unite himself to any one who is not a complete resemblance of himself, it will be impossible for him to form any union at all."

- ' If to no charms thou wilt thy heart resign,  
But such as merit, such as equal thine;  
By none, alas ! by none thou canst be moved :  
Phaon alone by Phaon must be loved.'

this early friend, Harry Hervey, thus : " He was a vicious man, but very kind to me. If you call a dog Hervey, I shall love him."

Boswell having mentioned that old Sheridan complained of the ingratitude of Mr. Wedderburne and General Fraser, who had been much obliged to him when they were young Scotchmen entering upon life in England. JOHNSON: " Why, sir, a man is very apt to complain of the ingratitude of those who have risen far above him. A man, when he gets into a higher sphere, into other habits of life, cannot keep up all his former connexions: then, sir, those who knew him formerly upon a level with themselves, may think that they ought still to be treated as on a level, which cannot be; and an acquaintance in a former situation may bring out things which it would be very disagreeable to have mentioned before higher company, though, perhaps, every body knows them." He placed this subject in a new light to his auditor, and showed, that a man who has risen in the world, must not be condemned too harshly for being distant to former acquaintance, even though he may have been much obliged to them. It is, no doubt, to be wished, that a proper degree of attention should be shown by great men to their early friends: but if, either from obtuse insensibility to difference of situation, or presumptuous forwardness, which will not submit even to an exterior observance of it, the dignity of high place cannot be preserved, when they are admitted into the company of those raised above the state in which they once were, encroachment must be repelled, and the kinder feelings sacrificed. "To one

of the very fortunate persons whom I have mentioned," adds Boswell, "namely, Mr. Wedderburne, now lord Loughborough, I must do the justice to relate, that I have been assured by another early acquaintance of his, old Mr. Macklin, who assisted in improving his pronunciation, that he found him very grateful. Macklin, I suppose, had not pressed upon his elevation with so much eagerness as the gentleman who complained of him. Dr. Johnson's remark as to the jealousy entertained of our friends who rise far above us, is certainly very just. By this was withered the early friendship between Charles Townshend and Akenside; and many similar instances might be adduced."

One evening, at Miss Reynolds's, Sir Joshua's sister, Boswell mentioned that an eminent friend of theirs, talking of the common remark that affection descends, said, that "this was wisely contrived for the preservation of mankind; for which it was not so necessary that there should be affection from children to parents, as from parents to children; nay, there would be no harm, in that view, though children should at a certain age eat their parents." JOHNSON. "But, sir, if this were known generally to be the case, parents would not have affection for children." BOSWELL. "True, sir; for it is in expectation of a return that parents are so attentive to their children; and I know a very pretty instance of a little girl of whom her father was very fond, who once, when he was in a melancholy fit, and had gone to bed, persuaded him to rise in good humour, by saying, 'My dear papa, please to get up, and let me help you on with your clothes, that I may learn to do it when you are an old man.'"

“ Having lain at St. Albans, on Thursday, March 28,” says Boswell, “ we breakfasted the next morning at Barnet. I expressed to him a weakness of mind which I could not help ; an uneasy apprehension that my wife and children, who were at a great distance from me, might, perhaps, be ill. ‘ Sir,’ said he, ‘ consider how foolish you would think it in *them* to be apprehensive that *you* are ill.’ This sudden turn relieved me for the moment, but I afterwards perceived it to be an ingenious fallacy.\* I might, to be sure, be satisfied, that they had no reason to be apprehensive about me, because I *knew* that I myself was well : but we might have a mutual anxiety without the charge of folly ; because each was, in some degree, uncertain as to the condition of the other.”

The subject of grief for the loss of relations and friends being introduced, Boswell observed, that it was strange to consider how soon it in general wears away. Dr. Taylor mentioned a gentleman of the neighbourhood as the only instance he had ever known of a person who had endeavoured to *retain* grief. He told Dr. Taylor, that after his lady’s death, which affected him deeply, he *resolved* that the grief, which he cherished with a kind of sacred fondness, should be lasting ; but that he found he could not keep it long. JOHNSON. “ All grief for what cannot in the

\* Surely it is no fallacy, but a sound and rational argument. He who is perfectly well, and apprehensive concerning the state of another at a distance from him, *knows* to a certainty that the fears of that person concerning *his* health are imaginary and delusive ; and hence has a rational ground for supposing that his own apprehensions concerning his absent wife or friend are equally unfounded. *Malone.*

course of nature be helped, soon wears away; in some sooner, indeed, in some later; but it never continues very long, unless where there is madness, such as will make a man have pride so fixed in his mind, as to imagine himself a king; or any other passion in an unreasonable way: for all unnecessary grief is unwise, and therefore will not be retained long by a sound mind. If, indeed, the cause of our grief is occasioned by our own misconduct, if grief is mingled with remorse of conscience, it should be lasting." BOSWELL. "But, sir, we do not approve of a man who very soon forgets the loss of a wife or a friend." JOHNSON. "Sir, we disapprove of him, not because he soon forgets his grief, for the sooner it is forgotten the better; but because we suppose, that if he forgets his wife or his friend soon, he has not had much affection for them."

## No. VIII.

## MARRIAGE.

JOHNSON asserted, "Marriage is the best state for man in general; and every man is a worse man, in proportion as he is unfit for the married state."

When Dr. Johnson was married, the ceremony was not performed at Birmingham, where the bride and bridegroom lived; but a resolution was taken that it should be at Derby, for which place they set out on horseback, no doubt in very good humour. But though Mr. Topham Beauclerk used archly to

mention Johnson's having told him, with much gravity, "Sir, it was a love marriage on both sides—" Boswell had from his illustrious friend the following curious account of their journey to church upon the nuptial morn, (the 9th of July, 1736) :—"Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me; and, when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end: I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears."

Mr. Seward heard Johnson once say, that "a man has a very bad chance for happiness in that state, unless he marries a woman of strong and fixed principles of religion." "He maintained to me," says Boswell, "contrary to the common notion, that a woman would not be the worse wife for being learned; in which, from all that I have observed of Artemisias, I humbly differed from him. That a woman should be sensible and well informed, I allow to be a great advantage; and think that Sir Thomas Overbury, in his rude versification,\* has very judiciously pointed out that degree of intelligence which is to be desired in a female companion.

\* "A Wife," a poem, 1614.

“ Give me, next *good*, an *understanding wife*,  
By nature *wise*, not *learned* by much art ;  
Some *knowledge* on her side will all my life  
More scope of conversation impart ;  
Besides, her inborne virtue fortify ;  
They are most good who best know *why*.”

“ When I censured a gentleman of my acquaintance,” says Boswell, “ for marrying a second time, as it showed a disregard of his first wife, he said, ‘ Not at all, sir. On the contrary, were he not to marry again, it might be concluded that his first wife had given him a disgust to marriage ; but by taking a second wife, he pays the highest compliment to the first, by showing that she made him so happy as a married man, that he wishes to be so a second time.’ So ingenious a turn did he give to this delicate question. And yet, on another occasion, he owned, that he once had almost asked a promise of Mrs. Johnson that she would not marry again, but had checked himself. Indeed I cannot help thinking, that in his case the request would have been unreasonable ; for if Mrs. Johnson forgot, or thought it no injury to the memory of her first love,—the husband of her youth, and the father of her children,—to make a second marriage, why should she be precluded from a third, should she be so inclined ? In Johnson’s persevering fond appropriation of his *Tetty*, even after her decease, he seems totally to have overlooked the prior claim of the honest Birmingham trader. I presume that her having been married before had, at times, given him some uneasiness ; for I remember his observing, upon the marriage of one of our common friends, ‘ He has done a



very foolish thing, sir; he has married a widow when he might have had a maid.'"

To Boswell he said, "Now, that you are going to marry, do not expect more from life than life will afford. You may often find yourself out of humour, and you may often think your wife not studious enough to please you; and yet you may have reason to consider yourself as upon the whole very happily married."

Talking of marriage in general, he observed, "Our marriage service is too refined. It is calculated only for the best kind of marriages; whereas, we should have a form for matches of convenience, of which there are many." He agreed with him, that there was no absolute necessity for having the marriage ceremony performed by a regular clergyman, for this was not commanded in Scripture.

Boswell was volatile enough to repeat to him a little epigrammatic song of his on matrimony, which Mr. Garrick had a few days before procured to be set to music by the very ingenious Mr. Dibdin.

#### A MATRIMONIAL THOUGHT.

In the blithe days of honey-moon,  
With Kate's allurements smitten,  
I loved her late, I loved her soon,  
And call'd her dearest kitten.

But now my kitten's grown a cat,  
And cross like other wives—  
O! by my soul, my honest Mat,  
I fear she has nine lives.

His illustrious friend said, "It is very well, sir; but you should not swear." Upon which he altered "O! by my soul," to "alas, alas!"

A gentleman, who had been very unhappy in marriage, married immediately after his wife died. Johnson said, "It is the triumph of hope over experience."

He observed, that a man of sense and education should meet a suitable companion in a wife. It was a miserable thing when the conversation could only be such as—whether the mutton should be boiled or roasted, and probably a dispute about this.

He did not approve of late marriages, observing, that more was lost in point of time, than compensated for by any possible advantages. Even ill assorted marriages were preferable to cheerless celibacy.

He disapproved of the Royal Marriage Bill: "Because," said he, "I would not have the people think that the validity of marriage depends on the will of man. I should not have been against making the marriage of any of the royal family, without the approbation of the king and parliament, highly criminal."

'At a dinner at General Paoli's, a question was started, "whether the state of marriage is natural to man?" JOHNSON. "Sir, it is so far from being natural for a man and woman to live in a state of marriage, that we find all the motives which they have for remaining in that connexion, and the restraints which civilized society imposes to prevent separation, are hardly sufficient to keep them together." PAOLI. "In a state of nature, a man and woman uniting together will form a strong and con-

stant affection, by the mutual pleasure each will receive; and the same causes of dissension will not arise between them as occur between husband and wife in a civilized state." JOHNSON. "Sir, they would have dissensions enough, though of another kind: one would choose to go a hunting in this wood, the other in that; one would choose to go a fishing in this lake, the other in that; or, perhaps, one would choose to go a hunting, when the other would choose to go a fishing; and so they would part. Besides, sir, a savage man and a savage woman meet by chance: and when the man sees another woman that pleases him better, he will leave the first."

"A young lady, who had married a man much her inferior in rank being mentioned at Mr. Thrale's, a question arose, how a woman's relations should behave to her in such a situation; and, while I recapitulate the debate," says Boswell, "and recollect what has since happened, I cannot but be struck in a manner that delicacy forbids me to express. While I contended that she ought to be treated with an inflexible steadiness of displeasure, Mrs. Thrale was all for mildness and forgiveness, and, according to the vulgar phrase, 'making the best of a bad bargain.' JOHNSON. 'Madam, we must distinguish. Were I a man of rank, I would not let a daughter starve who had made a mean marriage; but having voluntarily degraded herself from the station which she was originally entitled to hold, I would support her only in that which she herself had chosen, and would not put her on a level with my other daughters. You are to consider, madam, that it is our duty to maintain the subordination of civilized so-

ciety; and when there is a gross and shameful deviation from rank, it should be punished so as to deter others from the same perversion.'

"After frequently considering this subject, I am more and more confirmed in what I then meant to express, and which was sanctioned by the authority, and illustrated by the wisdom, of Johnson; and I think it of the utmost consequence to the happiness of society, to which subordination is absolutely necessary. It is weak, and contemptible, and unworthy in a parent, to relax in such a case. It is sacrificing general advantage to private feelings. And let it be considered, that the claim of a daughter who has acted thus, to be restored to her former situation, is either fantastical or unjust. If there be no value in the distinction of rank, what does she suffer by being kept in the situation to which she has descended? If there be a value in that distinction, it ought to be steadily maintained. If indulgence be shown to such conduct, and the offenders know that in a shorter or longer time they shall be received as well as if they had not contaminated their blood by a base alliance, the great check upon that inordinate caprice which generally occasions low marriages will be removed, and the fair and comfortable order of improved life will be miserably disturbed."

When a gentleman told him he had bought a suit of lace for his lady, he said, "Well, sir, you have done a good thing, and a wise one." "I have done a good thing," said the gentleman, "but I do not know that I have done a wise thing." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir; no money is better spent than what is laid out for domestic satisfaction. A man is pleased that his

wife is dressed as well as other people, and the wife is pleased that she is dressed."

Boswell talked of legitimization by subsequent marriage, which obtained in the Roman law, and still obtains in the law of Scotland. JOHNSON. "I think it a bad thing; because the chastity of women being of the utmost importance, as all property depends upon it, they who forfeit it should not have any possibility of being restored to good character; nor should the children by an illicit connexion attain the full right of lawful children, by the posterior consent of the offending parties." "His opinion upon this subject," Boswell remarks, "deserves consideration. Upon his principle, there may, at times, be a hardship, and seemingly a strange one, upon individuals; but the general good of society is better secured. And, after all, it is unreasonable in an individual to repine that he has not the advantage of a state which is made different from his own by the social institution under which he is born. A woman does not complain that her brother, who is younger than her, gets their common father's estate. Why then should a natural son complain that a younger brother, by the same parents lawfully begotten, gets it? The operation of law is similar in both cases."

He said, "It is commonly a weak man who marries for love." The conversation then turned on marrying women of fortune; and Boswell mentioned a common remark, that a man may be, upon the whole, richer by marrying a woman with a very small portion, because a woman of fortune will be proportionably expensive; whereas a woman who brings none will be very moderate in expenses.

**JOHNSON.** "Depend upon it, sir, this is not true. A woman of fortune, being used to the handling of money, spends it judiciously: but a woman who gets the command of money for the first time upon her marriage, has such a gust in spending it, that she throws it away with great profusion."

He praised the ladies of the present age, insisting that they were more faithful to their husbands, and more virtuous in every respect, than in former times, because their understandings were better cultivated.

Boswell repeated to him an argument of a lady of his acquaintance, who maintained that her husband's having been guilty of numberless infidelities, released her from conjugal obligations, because they were reciprocal. **JOHNSON.** "This is miserable stuff, sir: to the contract of marriage, besides the man and wife, there is a third party—society; and, if it be considered as a vow—God: and, therefore, it cannot be dissolved by their consent alone. Laws are not made for particular, but for men in general. A woman may be unhappy with her husband; but she cannot be freed from him without the approbation of the civil and ecclesiastical power. A man may be unhappy because he is not so rich as another; but he is not to seize upon another's property with his own hand." **BOSWELL.** "But, sir, this lady does not want that the contract should be dissolved; she only argues that she may indulge herself in gallantries with equal freedom as her husband does, provided she takes care not to introduce a spurious issue into his family. You know, sir, what Macrobius has told of Julia." **JOHNSON.**

"That lady of yours, sir, I think, is very fit for a brothel."

At another time, he observed, "Marriage, sir, is much more necessary to a man than to a woman: for he is much less able to supply himself with domestic comforts. You will recollect my saying to some ladies the other day, that I had often wondered why young women should marry, as they have so much more freedom, and so much more attention paid to them, than when married. I indeed did not mention the *strong* reason for their marrying—the *mechanical* reason." BOSWELL. "Why, that is a strong one; but does not imagination make it more important than it is in reality? is it not, to a certain degree, a delusion in us as well as in women?" JOHNSON. "Why, yes, sir; but it is a delusion that is always beginning again." BOSWELL. "I don't know but there is upon the whole more misery than happiness produced by that passion." JOHNSON. "I don't think so, sir."

## No. IX.

### CHILDREN.

BOSWELL said he disliked the custom which some people had of bringing their children into company, because it in a manner forced us to pay foolish compliments to please their parents. JOHNSON. "You are right, sir. We may be excused for not caring much about other people's children, for there are many who care very little about their own children."

It may be observed, that men, who from being engaged in business, or from their course of life in whatever way, seldom see their children, do not care much about them. I myself should not have had much fondness for a child of my own." MRS. THRALE. "Nay, sir, how can you talk so?" JOHNSON. "At least I never wished to have a child."

Another time Boswell asked, "If, sir, you were shut up in a castle, and a new-born child with you, what would you do?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, I should not much like my company." BOSWELL. "But would you take the trouble of rearing it?" He seemed, as may well be supposed, unwilling to pursue the subject: but upon Boswell's persevering in his question, replied, "Why, yes, sir, I would; but I must have all conveniences. If I had no garden, I would make a shed on the roof, and take it there for fresh air. I should feed it, and wash it much, and with warm water to please it, not with cold water to give it pain." BOSWELL. "But, sir, does not heat relax?" JOHNSON. "Sir, you are not to imagine the water is to be very hot: I would not *coddle* the child. No, sir, the hardy method of treating children does no good. I'll take you five children from London who shall cuff five Highland children. Sir, a man bred in London will carry a burthen, or run, or wrestle, as well as a man brought up in the hardest manner in the country." BOSWELL. "Good living, I suppose, makes the Loudoners strong." JOHNSON. "Why, I don't know that it does. Our chairmen from Ireland, who are as strong men as any, have been brought up upon potatoes. Quantity makes up for quality."



BOSWELL. "Would you teach this child that I have furnished you with, any thing?" JOHNSON. "No, I should not be apt to teach it." BOSWELL. "Would not you have a pleasure in teaching it?" JOHNSON. "No, sir, I should *not* have a pleasure in teaching it." BOSWELL. "Have you not a pleasure in teaching men? *There* I have you. You have the same pleasure in teaching men, that I should have in teaching children." JOHNSON. "Why, something about that."

BOSWELL. "Do you think, sir, that what is called natural affection is born with us? It seems to me to be the effect of habit, or of gratitude for kindness. No child has it for a parent whom it has not seen." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, I think there is an instinctive natural affection in parents towards their children."

On Boswell's consulting him as to the appointment of guardians to his children in case of his death, he said, "Sir, do not appoint a number of guardians. When there are many, they trust one to another, and the business is neglected. I would advise you to choose only one; let him be a man of respectable character, who, for his own credit, will do what is right; let him be a rich man, so that he may be under no temptation to take advantage; and let him be a man of business, who is used to conduct affairs with ability and expertness, to whom, therefore, the execution of the trust will not be burthensome."

## No. X.

## SOCIETY.

ROUSSEAU's treatise on the inequality of mankind was a fashionable topic. It gave rise to an observation by Mr. Dempster, that the advantages of fortune and rank were nothing to a wise man, who ought to value only merit. JOHNSON. "If man were a savage, living in woods by himself, this might be true; but in civilized society we all depend upon each other, and our happiness is very much owing to the good opinion of mankind. Now, sir, in civilized society, external advantages make us more respected. A man with a good coat upon his back meets with a better reception than he who has a bad one. Sir, you may analyse this, and say, what is there in it? But that will avail you nothing, for it is a part of a general system. Pound St. Paul's church into atoms, and consider any single atom; it is, to be sure, good for nothing; but put all these atoms together, and you have St. Paul's church. So it is with human felicity, which is made up of many ingredients, each of which may be shown to be very insignificant. In civilized society, personal merit will not serve you so much as money will. Sir, you may make the experiment. Go into the street, and give one man a lecture on morality, and another a shilling, and see which will respect you most. If you wish only to support nature, sir William Petty fixes your allowance at three pounds a year; but as times are much altered, let

us call it six pounds. This sum will fill your belly, shelter you from the weather, and even get you a strong lasting coat, supposing it to be made of good bull's hide. Now, sir, all beyond this is artificial, and is desired in order to obtain a greater degree of respect from our fellow-creatures: and, sir, if six hundred pounds a year procure a man more consequence, and, of course, more happiness, than six pounds a year, the same proportion will hold as to six thousand, and so on, as far as opulence can be carried. Perhaps he who has a large fortune may not be so happy as he who has a small one; but that must proceed from other causes than from his having the large fortune; for *cæteris paribus*, he who is rich in a civilized society, must be happier than he who is poor; as riches, if properly used (and it is a man's own fault if they are not), must be productive of the highest advantages. Money, to be sure, of itself is of no use; for its only use is to part with it. Rousseau, and all those who deal in paradoxes, are led away by a childish desire of novelty. When I was a boy, I used always to choose the wrong side of a debate, because most ingenious things, that is to say, most new things, could be said upon it. Sir, there is nothing for which you may not muster up more plausible arguments than those which are urged against wealth and other external advantages. Why, now, there is stealing; why should it be thought a crime? When we consider by what unjust methods property has been often acquired, and that what was unjustly got it must be unjust to keep, where is the harm in one man's taking the property of another from him?

Besides, sir, when we consider the bad use that many people make of their property, and how much better use the thief may make of it, it may be defended as a very allowable practice. Yet, sir, the experience of mankind has discovered stealing to be so very bad a thing, that they make no scruple to hang a man for it. When I was running about this town a very poor fellow, I was a great arguer for the advantages of poverty; but I was, at the same time, very sorry to be poor. Sir, all the arguments which are brought to represent poverty as no evil, show it to be evidently a great evil. You never find people labouring to convince you that you may live very happily upon a plentiful fortune. So you hear people talking how miserable a king must be; and yet they all wish to be in his place."

It was suggested that kings must be unhappy, because they are deprived of the greatest of all satisfactions, easy and unreserved society. JOHNSON. "That is an ill-founded notion. Being a king does not exclude a man from such society: great kings have always been social. The king of Prussia, the only great king at present, is very social. Charles the Second, the last king of England who was a man of parts, was social; and our Henrys and Edwards were all social."

Mr. Dempster having endeavoured to maintain that intrinsic merit *ought* to make the only distinction amongst mankind. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, mankind have found that this cannot be. How shall we determine the proportion of intrinsic merit? Were that to be the only distinction amongst mankind, we should soon quarrel about the degrees of it. Were all distinctions abolished, the strong-

est would not long acquiesce, but would endeavour to obtain a superiority by their bodily strength. But, sir, as subordination is very necessary for society, and contentions for superiority very dangerous, mankind, that is to say, all civilized nations, have settled it upon a plain invariable principle. A man is born to hereditary rank; or his being appointed to certain offices gives him a certain rank. Subordination tends greatly to human happiness. Were we all upon an equality, we should have no other enjoyment than mere animal pleasure."

Boswell said, he considered distinction or rank to be of so much importance in civilized society, that if he were asked on the same day to dine with the first duke in England, and with the first man in Britain for genius, he should hesitate which to prefer. JOHNSON. "To be sure, sir, if you were to dine only once, and it were never to be known where you dined, you would choose rather to dine with the first man for genius; but to gain most respect, you should dine with the first duke in England: for nine people in ten that you meet with would have a higher opinion of you for having dined with a duke; and the great genius himself would receive you better, because you had been with the great duke."

He took care to guard himself against any possible suspicion that his settled principles of reverence for rank and respect for wealth were at all owing to mean or interested motives; for he asserted his own independence as a literary man. "No man," said he, "who ever lived by literature, has lived more independently than I have done."

He more than once insisted on the duty of main-

taining subordination of rank. "Sir, I would no more deprive a nobleman of his respect than of his money. I consider myself as acting a part in the great system of society, and I do to others as I would have them to do to me. I would behave to a nobleman as I should expect he would behave to me, were I a nobleman and he Sam Johnson. Sir, there is one Mrs. Macaulay in this town, a great republican. One day, when I was at her house, I put on a very grave countenance, and said to her, 'Madam, I am now become a convert to your way of thinking. I am convinced that all mankind are upon an equal footing; and to give you an unquestionable proof, madam, that I am in earnest, here is a very sensible, civil, well-behaved fellow citizen, your footman; I desire that he may be allowed to sit down and dine with us.' I thus, sir, showed her the absurdity of the levelling doctrine. She has never liked me since. Sir, your levellers wish to level *down* as far as themselves; but they cannot bear levelling *up* to themselves. They would all have some people under them; why not then have some people above them?" Boswell mentioned a certain author, who disgusted him by his forwardness, and by showing no deference to noblemen, into whose company he was admitted. JOHNSON. "Suppose a shoemaker should claim an equality with him, as he does with a lord: how he would stare! 'Why, sir, do you stare?' says the shoemaker, 'I do great service to society. 'Tis true, I am paid for doing it; but so are you, sir; and I am sorry to say it, better paid than I am, for doing something not so necessary; for mankind could do better without your books than without my shoes.'

Thus, sir, there would be a perpetual struggle for precedence, were there no fixed invariable rules for the distinction of rank, which creates no jealousy, as it is allowed to be accidental."

In a discussion whether the present earl of Buchan, when lord Cardross, did right to refuse to go secretary of embassy to Spain, when sir James Gray, a man of inferior rank, went ambassador; Dr. Johnson said, "that perhaps in point of interest he did wrong; but in point of dignity he did well." Sir Alexander Macdonald insisted that he was wrong; and said that Mr. Pitt intended it as an advantageous thing for him. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, Mr. Pitt might think it an advantageous thing for him to make him a vintner, and get him all the Portugal trade; but he would have demeaned himself strangely had he accepted of such a situation. Sir, had he gone secretary, while his inferior was ambassador, he would have been a traitor to his rank and family."

He talked with a noble enthusiasm of keeping up the representation of respectable families. His zeal on this subject was a circumstance in his character exceedingly remarkable, when it is considered that he himself had no pretensions to blood. Boswell heard him once say, "I have great merit in being zealous for subordination and the honours of birth; for I can hardly tell who was my grandfather." He maintained the dignity and propriety of male succession, in opposition to the opinion of one of his friends, who had that day employed Mr. Chalmers to draw his will, devising his estate to his three sisters, in preference to a remote heir male. Johnson called them "three *dowdies*," and said, with as high a spirit as the boldest baron in the

most perfect days of the feudal system, "An ancient estate should always go to males. It is mighty foolish to let a stranger have it because he marries your daughter, and takes your name. As for an estate newly acquired by trade, you may give it, if you will, to the dog *Towser*, and let him keep his *own* name."

Johnson was not the less ready to love Mr. Langton for his being of a very ancient family; for Boswell has heard him say with pleasure, "Langton, sir, has a grant of free warren from Henry the Second; and cardinal Stephen Langton, in king John's reign, was of this family."

One morning Boswell talked of old families, and the respect due to them. JOHNSON. "Sir, you have a right to that kind of respect, and are arguing for yourself. I am for supporting the principle, and am disinterested in doing it, as I have no such right." BOSWELL. "Why, sir, it is one more incitement to a man to do well." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, and it is a matter of opinion very necessary to keep society together. What is it but opinion, by which we have a respect for authority, that prevents us, who are the rabble, from rising and pulling down you, who are gentlemen, from your places, and saying, 'We will be gentlemen in our turn.' Now, sir, that respect for authority is much more easily granted to a man whose father has had it, than to an upstart; and so society is more easily supported." BOSWELL. "Perhaps, sir, it might be done by the respect belonging to office, as among the Romans, where the dress, the *toga*, inspired reverence." JOHNSON. "Why, we know very little about the Romans. But surely it is much easier to respect a



man who has always had respect, than to respect a man who we know was last year no better than ourselves, and will be no better next year. { In republics there is no respect for authority, but a fear of power." BOSWELL. "At present, sir, I think riches seem to gain most respect." JOHNSON. "No, sir, riches do not gain hearty respect; they only procure external attention. A very rich man, from low beginnings, may buy his election in a borough; but, *cæteris paribus*, a man of family will be preferred. People will prefer a man for whose father their fathers have voted, though they should get no more money, or even less. That shows that the respect for family is not merely fanciful, but has an actual operation. If gentlemen of family would allow the rich upstarts to spend their money profusely, which they are ready enough to do, and not vie with them in expense, the upstarts would soon be at an end, and the gentlemen would remain; but if the gentlemen will vie in expense with the upstarts, which is very foolish, they must be ruined."

When Boswell talked to him of the paternal estate to which he was heir, he said, "Sir, let me tell you, that to be a Scotch landlord, where you have a number of families dependent upon you, and attached to you, is, perhaps, as high a situation as humanity can arrive at. A merchant upon the 'Change of London, with a hundred thousand pounds, is nothing; an English duke, with an immense fortune, is nothing: he has no tenants who consider themselves as under his patriarchal care, and who will follow him to the field upon an emergency." His notion of the dignity of a Scotch landlord had been formed upon what he had heard of

the Highland chiefs ; for it is long since a Lowland landlord has been so curtailed in his feudal authority, that he has little more influence over his tenants than an English landlord : and of late years most of the Highland chiefs have destroyed, by means too well known, the princely power which they once enjoyed.

Speaking of the little attachment which subsisted between near relations in London, " Sir," said Johnson, " in a country so commercial as ours, where every man can do for himself, there is not so much occasion for that attachment. No man is thought the worse of here, whose brother was hanged. [In uncommercial countries, many of the branches of a family must depend on the stock ; so, in order to make the head of the family take care of them, they are represented as connected with his reputation, that, self-love being interested, he may exert himself to promote their interest. You have first large circles, or clans ; as commerce increases, the connexion is confined to families ; by degrees, that too goes off, as having become unnecessary, and there being few opportunities of intercourse. One brother is a merchant in the city, and another is an officer in the guards : how little intercourse can these two have !"]

Boswell argued warmly for the feudal system ; sir Alexander Macdonald opposed it, and talked of the pleasure of seeing all men free and independent. JOHNSON. " I agree with Mr. Boswell, that there must be high satisfaction in being a feudal lord ; but we are to consider that we ought not to wish to have a number of men unhappy for the satisfaction of one." Boswell maintained, that numbers,

namely, the vassals or followers, were not unhappy, for that there was a reciprocal satisfaction between the lord and them; he being kind in his authority over them—they being respectful and faithful to him.

On his favourite subject of subordination, Johnson said, "So far is it from being true that men are naturally equal, that no two people can be half an hour together, but one shall acquire an evident superiority over the other."

"In barbarous society," he observed, "superiority of parts is of real consequence. Great strength or great wisdom is of much value to an individual: but in more polished times there are people to do every thing for money; and then there are a number of other superiorities, such as those of birth, and fortune, and rank, that dissipate men's attention, and leave no extraordinary share of respect for personal and intellectual superiority. This is wisely ordered by Providence, to preserve some equality among mankind."

Armorial bearings having been mentioned, Johnson said they were as ancient as the siege of Thebes, which he proved by a passage in one of the tragedies of Euripides.

Boswell mentioned with much regret the extravagance of the representative of a great family in Scotland, by which there was danger of its being ruined: and as Johnson respected it for its antiquity, he joined with him in thinking it would be happy if this person should die. Mrs. Thrale seemed shocked at this, as feudal barbarity; and said, "I do not understand this preference of the estate to its owner—of the land to the man who walks upon

that land." JOHNSON. "Nay, madam, it is not a preference of the land to its owner; it is the preference of a family to an individual. Here is an establishment in a country, which is of importance for ages, not only to the chief, but to his people; an establishment which extends upwards and downwards; that this should be destroyed by one idle fellow is a sad thing. Entails are good, because it is good to preserve in a country serieses of men, to whom the people are accustomed to look up as to their leaders. But I am for leaving a quantity of land in commerce, to excite industry, and keep money in the country; for if no land were to be bought in the country, there would be no encouragement to acquire wealth, because a family could not be founded there; or if it were acquired, it must be carried away to another country where land may be bought: and although the land in every country will remain the same, and be as fertile where there is no money, as where there is, yet all that portion of the happiness of civil life, which is produced by money circulating in a country, would be lost." BOSWELL. "Then, sir, would it be for the advantage of a country that all its lands were sold at once?" JOHNSON. "So far, sir, as money produces good, it would be an advantage; for then that country would have as much money circulating in it as it is worth. But to be sure this would be counterbalanced by advantages attending a total change of proprietors." BOSWELL. "I think that the power of entailing should be limited thus: there should be one-third, or perhaps one-half, of the land of a country kept free for commerce; and the proportion allowed to be entailed should be

parcelled out so that no family could entail above a certain quantity. Let a family, according to the ability of its representatives, be richer or poorer in different generations, or always rich if its representatives be always wise; but let its absolute permanency be moderate. In this way we should be certain of there being always a number of established roots; and as, in the course of nature, there is in every age an extinction of some families, there would be continual openings for men ambitious of perpetuity to plant a stock in the entailed ground."

JOHNSON. "Why, sir, mankind will be better able to regulate the system of entails, when the evil of too much land being locked up by them is felt, than we can do at present, when it is not felt."

He thus discoursed upon supposed obligation in settling estates: "Where a man gets the unlimited property of an estate, there is no obligation upon him in *justice* to leave it to one person rather than to another. There is a motive of preference from *kindness*, and this kindness is generally entertained for the nearest relation. If I *owe* a particular man a sum of money, I am obliged to let that man have the next money I get, and cannot in justice let another have it; but if I owe money to no man, I may dispose of what I get as I please. There is not a *debitum justitiæ* to a man's next heir; there is only a *debitum caritatis*. It is plain, then, that I have morally a choice, according to my liking. If I have a brother in want, he has a claim from affection to my assistance: but if I have also a brother in want, whom I like better, he has a preferable claim. The right of an heir at law is only this; that he is to have the succession to an estate, in case no other

person is appointed to it by the owner. His right is merely preferable to that of the king."

When talking of the power of riches, Johnson exclaimed, "If I were a man of a great estate, I would drive all the rascals whom I did not like out of the county, at an election."

Boswell asked him, how far he thought wealth should be employed in hospitality. JOHNSON. "You are to consider that ancient hospitality, of which we hear so much, was in an uncommercial country, when men being idle, were glad to be entertained at rich men's tables: but in a commercial country, a busy country, time becomes precious, and therefore hospitality is not so much valued. No doubt there is still room for a certain degree of it; and a man has a satisfaction in seeing his friends eating and drinking around him: but promiscuous hospitality is not the way to gain real influence. You must help some people at table before others; you must ask some people how they like their wine oftener than others: you therefore offend more people than you please. You are like the French statesman, who said, when he granted a favour, *J'ai fait dix mécontents et un ingrat*. Besides, sir, being entertained ever so well at a man's table, impresses no lasting regard or esteem. No, sir, the way to make sure of power and influence is, by lending money confidentially to your neighbours at a small interest, or perhaps at no interest at all, and having their bonds in your possession." BOSWELL. "May not a man, sir, employ his riches to advantage, in educating young men of merit?" JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, if they fall in your way: but if it be understood that you patronize young men of merit, you will

be harassed with solicitations. You will have numbers forced upon you, who have no merit; some will force them upon you from mistaken partiality, and some from downright interested motives, without a scruple; and you will be disgraced. Were I a rich man, I would propagate all kinds of trees that will grow in the open air. A green-house is childish. I would introduce foreign animals into the country; for instance, the rein-deer."\*

Observing some beggars in the street as they walked along, Boswell said to him, "I suppose there is no civilized country in the world where the misery of want in the lowest classes of the people is prevented." JOHNSON. "I believe, sir, there is not; but it is better that some should be unhappy, than that none should be happy, which would be the case in a general state of equality."

## No. XI.

### NATIONS.

JOHNSON scouted the idea of nations having any peculiar characteristics. He said, "there is no permanent natural character; it varies according to circumstances. Alexander swept the great India: now the Turks sweep Greece."

He was of opinion that the English nation cultivated both their soil and their reason better than

\* This project has since been realized. Sir Henry Liddell, who made a spirited tour into Lapland, brought two rein-deer to his estate in Northumberland, where they bred; but the race has unfortunately perished.

any other people; but admitted that the French, though not the highest, perhaps, in any department of literature, yet in every department were very high. Intellectual pre-eminence, he observed, was the highest superiority; and that every nation derived their highest reputation from the splendour and dignity of their writers. *Voltaire*, he said, was a good narrator, and that his principal merit consisted in a happy selection and arrangement of circumstances. Speaking of the French novels, compared with *Richardson's*, he said, they might be pretty baubles—but a wren was not an eagle. In a Latin conversation with the *Pere Boscovitch*, at the house of *Mrs. Cholmondeley*, he maintained the superiority of *sir Isaac Newton* over all foreign philosophers, with a dignity and eloquence that surprised that learned foreigner.\* It being observed to him, that a rage for every thing English prevailed much in France, after *Lord Chatham's* glorious war; he said, he did not wonder at it; for that we had drubbed those fellows into a proper reverence for us, and that their national petulance required periodical chastisement.

He observed, “The great in France live very magnificently, but the rest very miserably. There is no happy middle state as in England. The shops of Paris are mean; the meat in the markets is such

\* In a discourse by *sir William Jones*, addressed to the Asiatic Society, February 25, 1778, is the following passage: “One of the most sagacious men in this age, who continues, I hope, to improve and adorn it, *Samuel Johnson*, remarked in my hearing, that if *Newton* had flourished in ancient Greece, he would have been worshipped as a divinity.”—*Malone*.



as would be sent to a gaol in England : and Mr. Thrale justly observed, that the cookery of the French was forced upon them by necessity ; for they could not eat their meat unless they added some taste to it. The French are an indelicate people ; they will spit upon any place. At madam \* \* \* \* 's, a literary lady of rank, the footman took the sugar in his fingers, and threw it into my coffee. I was going to put it aside ; but hearing it was made on purpose for me, I ev'n tasted Tom's fingers. The same lady would needs make tea *à l'Angloise*. The spout of the tea-pot did not pour freely ; she bade the footman blow into it. France is worse than Scotland in every thing but climate. Nature has done more for the French ; but they have done less for themselves, than the Scotch have done."

He said the poor in England were better provided for than in any other country of the same extent : he did not mean little cantons, or petty republics. "Where a great proportion of the people," said he, "are suffered to languish in helpless misery, that country must be ill policed, and wretchedly governed : a decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization. Gentlemen of education," he observed, "were pretty much the same in all countries ; the condition of the lower orders, (the poor especially) was the true mark of national discrimination."

Boswell having observed, that it was strange how well Scotchmen were known to one another in their own country, though born in very distant counties ; for we do not find that the gentlemen of neighbouring counties in England are mutually known to each other : Johnson, with his usual acuteness, at

once saw and explained the reason of this : " Why, sir, you have Edinburgh, where the gentlemen from all your counties meet, and which is not so large but that they are all known. There is no such common place of collection in England, except London, where, from its great size and diffusion, many of those who reside in contiguous counties of England, may long remain unknown to each other."

He defended his remark upon the general insufficiency of education in Scotland, and confirmed to Boswell the authenticity of his witty saying on the learning of the Scotch—" Their learning is like bread in a besieged town : every man gets a little, but no one gets a full meal." " There is," said he, " in Scotland a profusion of learning, a certain portion of it widely and thinly spread. A merchant has as much learning as one of their clergy."

Boswell put him in mind, that the landlord at Ellon, in Scotland, said that he heard he was the greatest man in England—next to Lord Mansfield. " Ay, sir," said he, " the exception defined the idea. A Scotchman could go no farther :

' The force of nature could no farther go.' "

He observed, that " the Irish mix better with the English than the Scotch do ; their language is nearer to English ; as a proof of which they succeed very well as players, which Scotchmen do not. Then, sir, they have not that extreme nationality which we find in the Scotch. I will do you, Boswell, the justice to say that you are the most *un-scottified* of your countrymen. You are almost the only instance of a Scotchman that I have known,

who did not, at every other sentence, bring in some other Scotchman."

Dr. Barnard, now bishop of Killaloe, having once expressed to him an apprehension, that, if he should visit Ireland, he might treat the people of that country more unfavourably than he had done the Scotch; he answered, with strong double-edged wit, "Sir, you have no reason to be afraid of me. The Irish are not in a conspiracy to cheat the world by false representations of the merits of their countrymen. No, sir; the Irish are a *fair people*; they never speak well of one another."

## No. XII.

### LIFE,

DINING at the Mitre, Boswell attempted to argue for the superior happiness of the savage life, upon the usual fanciful topics. JOHNSON. "Sir, there can be nothing more false. The savages have no bodily advantages beyond those of civilized men: they have not better health; and as to care or mental uneasiness, they are not above it, but below it, like bears. No, sir; you are not to talk such paradox: let me have no more on't. It cannot entertain, far less can it instruct. Lord Monboddo, one of your Scotch judges, talked a great deal of such nonsense: I suffered *him*, but I will not suffer *you*." BOSWELL. "But, sir, does not Rousseau talk such nonsense?" JOHNSON. "True, sir, but Rousseau *knows* he is talking nonsense, and laughs at the world for staring at him." BOSWELL. "How

so, sir?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, a man who talks nonsense so well, must know that he is talking nonsense; but I am *afraid* (chuckling and laughing) Monboddo does not know that he is talking nonsense." BOSWELL. "Is it wrong then, sir, to affect singularity, in order to make people stare?" JOHNSON. "Yes, if you do it by propagating error: and, indeed, it is wrong in any way. There is in human nature a general inclination to make people stare; and every wise man has himself to cure of it, and does cure himself. If you wish to make people stare by doing better than others, why, make them stare till they stare their eyes out. But consider how easy it is to make people stare by being absurd. I may do it by going into a drawing-room without my shoes. You remember the gentleman in the *Spectator*, who had a commission of lunacy taken out against him for his extreme singularity, such as never wearing a wig, but a nightcap: now, sir, abstractedly, the nightcap was the best; but, relatively, the advantage was overbalanced by his making the boys run after him."

The modes of living in different countries, and the various views with which men travel in quest of new scenes, having been talked of, a learned gentleman, who holds a considerable office in the law, expatiated on the happiness of a savage life; and mentioned an instance of an officer who had actually lived for some time in the wilds of America, of whom, when in that state, he quoted this reflection with an air of admiration, as if it had been deeply philosophical: "Here am I, free and unrestrained, amidst the rude magnificence of nature, with this Indian woman by my side, and this gun,

with which I can procure food when I want it : what more can be desired for human happiness ?" It did not require much sagacity to foresee that such a sentiment would not be permitted to pass without due animadversion. JOHNSON. " Do not allow yourself, sir, to be imposed upon by such gross absurdity : it is sad stuff ; it is brutish. If a bull could speak, he might as well exclaim, Here am I with this cow and this grass ; what being can enjoy greater felicity ?"

BOSWELL. " I am well assured that the people of Otaheite, who have the bread tree, the fruit of which serves them for bread, laughed heartily when they were informed of the tedious process necessary with us to have bread—ploughing, sowing, harrowing, reaping, threshing, grinding, baking." JOHNSON. " Why, sir, all ignorant savages will laugh when they are told of the advantages of civilized life. Were you to tell men, who live without houses, how we pile brick upon brick, and rafter upon rafter, and that after a house is raised to a certain height, a man tumbles off a scaffold, and breaks his neck—he would laugh heartily at our folly in building : but it does not follow that men are better without houses. No, sir, (holding up a slice of a good loaf,) this is better than the bread tree."

Dr. Johnson talked with approbation of one who had attained to the state of the philosophical wise man, that is, to have no want of any thing. BOSWELL. " Then, sir, the savage is a wise man." JOHNSON. " Sir, I do not mean simply being without, but not having a want." Boswell maintained against this proposition ; that it was better to have fine clothes, for instance, than not to feel the want

of them. JOHNSON. "No, sir; fine clothes are good only as they supply the wants of other means of procuring respect. Was Charles the Twelfth, think you, less respected for his coarse blue coat and black stock? And you find the king of Prussia dresses plain, because the dignity of his character is sufficient." Boswell here brought himself into a scrape; for he heedlessly said, "Would not *you*, sir, be the better for velvet embroidery?" JOHNSON. "Sir, you put an end to all argument when you introduce your opponent himself. Have you no better manners? There is *your want*."

He had been in company with Omai, a native of one of the South Sea Islands, was struck with the elegance of his behaviour, and accounted for it thus: "Sir, he had passed his time, while in England, only in the best company; so that all he had acquired of our manners was genteel. As a proof of this, sir, lord Mulgrave and he dined one day at Streatham; they sat with their backs to the light, fronting me, so that I could not see distinctly; and there was so little of the savage in Omai, that I was afraid to speak to either, lest I should mistake one for the other."

A gentleman expressed a wish to go and live three years at Otaheite, or New Zealand, in order to obtain a full acquaintance with people so totally different from all that we have ever known, and be satisfied what pure nature can do for man. JOHNSON. "What could you learn, sir? What can savages tell but what they themselves have seen? Of the past, or the invisible, they can tell nothing. The inhabitants of Otaheite and New Zealand are not in a state of pure nature; for it is plain they

broke off from some other people : had they grown out of the ground, you might have judged of a state of pure nature. Fanciful people may talk of a mythology being amongst them ; but it must be invention : they have once had religion, which has been gradually debased. And what account of their religion can you suppose to be learned from savages ? Only consider, sir, our own state : our religion is in a book ; we have an order of men whose duty it is to teach it ; we have one day in the week set apart for it—and this is in general pretty well observed : yet ask the first ten gross men you meet, and hear what they can tell of their religion."

He maintained that a boy at school was the happiest of human beings. Boswell supported a different opinion—that a man is happier ; and enlarged upon the anxiety and sufferings which are endured at school. JOHNSON. " Ah ! sir, a boy's being flogged is not so severe as a man's having the hiss of the world against him. Men have a solicitude about fame ; and the greater share they have of it, the more afraid they are of losing it."

At another time, Boswell having mentioned Hume's notion, that all who are happy are equally happy ; a little miss with a new gown at a dancing-school ball, a general at the head of a victorious army, and an orator, after having made an eloquent speech in a great assembly. JOHNSON. " Sir, that all who are happy are equally happy, is not true. A peasant and a philosopher may be equally *satisfied*, but not equally *happy*. Happiness consists in the multiplicity of agreeable consciousness. A peasant has not capacity for having equal happiness with a philosopher." This

question was very happily illustrated by the Rev. Mr. Robert Brown, at Utrecht: "A small drinking glass and a large one," said he, "may be equally full, but the large one holds more than the small."

Boswell maintained, that Horace was wrong in placing happiness in *nil admirari*, as he thought admiration one of the most agreeable of all our feelings; and regretted that he had lost much of his disposition to admire, which people generally do as they advance in life. JOHNSON. "Sir, as a man advances in life, he gets what is better than admiration—judgment, to estimate things at their true value." BOSWELL. "But admiration is more pleasing than judgment, as love is more pleasing than friendship. The feeling of friendship is like that of being comfortably filled with roast beef; love, like being enlivened with champagne." JOHNSON. "No, sir, admiration and love are like being intoxicated with champagne; judgment and friendship like being enlivened. Waller has hit upon the same thought with you: but I don't believe you have borrowed from Waller. I wish you would enable yourself to borrow more."

One afternoon, as he was driving rapidly along in a post-chaise, he said to Boswell, "Life has not many things better than this." On another occasion, however, when he and this gentleman were returning to town, from the same excursion into the country, the latter says, "I enjoyed the luxury of our approach to London; that metropolis which we both loved so much for the high and varied intellectual pleasure which it furnishes. I experienced immediate happiness while whirled along with such a companion, and said to him, 'Sir, you observed one day at general Oglethorpe's, that a man



is never happy for the present, but when he is drunk; will you not add—or when driving rapidly in a post-chaise?" JOHNSON. "No, sir, you are driving rapidly *from* something, or *to* something."

Even in London, to which he was so much attached, he could say, "That man is never happy for the present is so true, that all his relief from unhappiness is only forgetting himself a little while. Life is a progress from want to want, not from enjoyment to enjoyment." And one day, enlarging upon Pope's melancholy remark,

"Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest,"

he asserted, that the *present* was never a happy state to any human being; but that, as every part of life, of which we are conscious, was at some point of time a period yet to come, in which felicity was expected, there was some happiness produced by hope. Being pressed upon this subject, and asked if he really was of opinion, that though, in general, happiness was very rare in human life, a man was not sometimes happy in the moment that was present, he answered, "Never, but when he is drunk."

Dining at an excellent inn at Chapel House, after a ride through Blenheim park, he expatiated on the felicity of England in its taverns and inns, and triumphed over the French for not having, in any perfection, the tavern life. "There is no private house," said he, "in which people can enjoy themselves so well as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that every body should be easy; in the nature

of things it cannot be : there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests ; the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him ; and no man, but a very impudent dog indeed, can as freely command what is in another man's house as if it were his own : whereas, at a tavern, there is a general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome : and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. No servant will attend you with the alacrity which waiters do, who are incited by the prospect of an immediate reward in proportion as they please. No, sir ; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn.\* He then repeated, with great emotion, Shenstone's lines—

“ Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,  
Where'er his stages may have been,  
May sigh to think he still has found  
The warmest welcome at an inn.”

Another time, at supper, he talked of good eating with uncommon satisfaction. “ Some people,”

\* Sir John Hawkins has preserved very few *Memorabilia* of Johnson. There is, however, to be found in his bulky tome, a very excellent one upon this subject. “ In contradiction to those who, having a wife and children, prefer domestic enjoyments to those which a tavern affords, I have heard him assert, ‘ that a tavern chair was the throne of human felicity.’ ‘ As soon,’ said he, ‘ as I enter the door of a tavern, I experience an oblivion of care, and a freedom from solicitude : when I am seated, I find the master coun-

said he, "have a foolish way of not minding, or pretending not to mind, what they eat. For my part, I mind my belly very studiously, and very carefully; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind any thing else." Boswell adds, "He now appeared to me *Jean Bull philosophe*, and he was for the moment not only serious, but vehement. Yet I have heard him, upon other occasions, talk with great contempt of people who were anxious to gratify their palates; and the twenty-sixth number of his *Rambler* is a masterly essay against gulosity. His practice, indeed, I must acknowledge may be considered as casting the balance of his different opinions upon this subject; for I never knew any man relish good eating as he did. When at table he was totally absorbed in the business of the moment; his looks seemed rivetted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others, till he had satisfied his appetite, which was so fierce, and indulged with such intenseness, that while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled, and generally a strong perspiration was visible. To those whose sensations were delicate, this could not but be disgusting; and it was doubtless not very suitable to the character of a philosopher, who should be distinguished by self-command. But it

teous, and the servants obsequious to my call; anxious to know, and ready to supply my wants: wine there exhilarates my spirits, and prompts me to free conversation, and an interchange of discourse with those whom I most love: I dogmatise, and am contradicted; and in this conflict of opinion and sentiments I find delight."

must be owned, that Johnson, though he could be rigidly *abstemious*, was not a *temperate* man either in eating or drinking. He could refrain, but he could not use moderately. He told me, that he had fasted two days without inconvenience, and that he had never been hungry but once. They who beheld with wonder how much he eat upon all occasions when his dinner was to his taste, could not easily conceive what he must have meant by hunger; and not only was he remarkable for the extraordinary quantity which he eat, but he was, or affected to be, a man of very nice discernment in the science of cookery. He used to descant critically on the dishes which had been at table where he had dined or supped, and to recollect very minutely what he had liked. I remember, when he was in Scotland, his praising *Gordon's palates*, (a dish of palates at the Honourable Alexander Gordon's) with a warmth of expression which might have done honour to more important subjects. 'As for Mac-laurin's imitation of a *made dish*, it was a wretched attempt.' He, about the same time, was so much displeased with the performances of a nobleman's French cook, that he exclaimed with vehemence, 'I'd throw such a rascal into the river;' and he then proceeded to alarm a lady at whose house he was to sup, by the following manifesto of his skill: 'I, madam, who live at a variety of good tables, am a much better judge of cookery, than any person who has a very tolerable cook, but lives much at home; for his palate is gradually adapted to the taste of his cook; whereas, madam, in trying by a wider range, I can more exquisitely judge.' When invited to dine, even with an intimate friend, he

was not pleased if something better than a plain dinner was not prepared for him. I have heard him say, on such an occasion, 'This was a good dinner enough, to be sure; but it was not a dinner to *ask* a man to.' On the other hand, he was wont to express, with great glee, his satisfaction when he had been entertained quite to his mind. One day, when he had dined with his neighbour and landlord in Bolt-court, Mr. Allen, the printer, whose old housekeeper had studied his taste in every thing, he pronounced this eulogy: 'Sir, we could not have had a better dinner had there been a synod of cooks.' "

He said, "Many things which are false are transmitted from book to book, and gain credit in the world. One of these is the cry against the evil of luxury. Now the truth is, that luxury produces much good. Take the luxury of buildings in London; does it not produce real advantage in the conveniency and elegance of accommodation, and this all from the exertion of industry? People will tell you, with a melancholy face, how many builders are in gaol. It is plain they are in gaol, not for building, for rents are not fallen. A man gives half-a-guinea for a dish of green pease: how much gardening does this occasion! how many labourers must the competition to have such things early in the market keep in employment! You will hear it said, very gravely, 'Why was not the half guinea, thus spent in luxury, given to the poor? To how many might it have afforded a good meal! Alas! has it not gone to the *industrious* poor, whom it is better to support than the *idle* poor? You are much surer that you are doing good when you *pay* money

to those who work, as the recompence of their labour, than when you *give* money merely in charity. Suppose the ancient luxury of a dish of peacocks' brains were to be revived, how many carcasses would be left to the poor at a cheap rate ! and as to the rout that is made about people who are ruined by extravagance, it is no matter to the nation that some individuals suffer. When so much general productive exertion is the consequence of luxury, the nation does not care though there are debtors in gaol : nay, they would not care though their creditors were there too."

He, Dr. Goldsmith, and Boswell, dined at general Oglethorpe's. Goldsmith expatiated on the common topic, that the race of our people was degenerated, and that this was owing to luxury. JOHNSON. " Sir, in the first place, I doubt the fact. I believe there are as many tall men in England now as ever there were. But, secondly, supposing the stature of our people to be diminished, that is not owing to luxury ; for, sir, consider to how very small a proportion of our people luxury can reach. Our soldiery, surely, are not luxurious, who live on sixpence a day ; and the same remark will apply to almost all the other classes. Luxury, so far as it reaches the poor, will do good to the race of people ; it will strengthen and multiply them. Sir, no nation was ever hurt by luxury ; for, as I said before, it can reach but to a very few. I admit that the great increase of commerce and manufactures hurts the military spirit of a people ; because it produces a competition for something else than martial honours,—a competition for riches. It also hurts the

bodies of the people ; for you will observe, there is no man who works at any particular trade, but you may know him, from his appearance, to do so. One part or the other of his body being more used than the rest, he is in some degree deformed : but, sir, that is not luxury. A tailor sits cross-legged ; but that is not luxury." GOLDSMITH. " Come, you're just going to the same place by another road." JOHNSON. " Nay, sir, I say that is not *luxury*. Let us take a walk from Charing-cross to Whitechapel, through, I suppose, the greatest series of shops in the world : what is there in any of these shops, (if you except gin-shops) that can do any human being any harm ?" GOLDSMITH. " Well, sir, I'll accept your challenge. The very next shop to Northumberland-house is a pickle-shop." JOHNSON. " Well, sir : do we not know that my maid can, in one afternoon, make pickles sufficient to serve a whole family for a year ? nay, that five pickle-shops can serve all the kingdom ? besides, Sir, there is no harm done to any body by the making of pickles, or the eating of pickles."

" Desirous of calling Johnson forth to talk," says Boswell, " and exercise his wit, though I should myself be the object of it, I resolutely ventured to undertake the defence of convivial indulgence in wine, though he was not to-night in the most genial humour. After urging the common plausible topics, I at last had recourse to the maxim, '*in vino veritas*—a man who is well warmed with wine will speak truth.'" JOHNSON. " Why, sir, that may be an argument for drinking, if you suppose men in general to be liars : but, sir, I would not keep

company with a fellow, who lies as long as he is sober, and whom you must make drunk before you can get a word of truth out of him."

He allowed indeed, that few people had intellectual resources sufficient to forego the pleasures of wine : they could not otherwise contrive how to fill the interval between dinner and supper.

Indeed, notwithstanding his remark on happiness above quoted, made at general Oglethorpe's, he was far from an advocate for wine. Accordingly, he often recommended to Boswell to drink water only : " for you are then sure not to get drunk ; whereas, if you drink wine, you are never sure." Boswell said, drinking wine was a pleasure which he was unwilling to give up. JOHNSON. " Why, sir, there is no doubt that not to drink wine is a great deduction from life : but it may be necessary." He however owned, that in his opinion, a free use of wine did not shorten life ; and said, he would not give less for the life of a certain Scotch lord (whom he named), celebrated for hard drinking, than for that of a sober man. " But stay, (added he, with his usual intelligence and accuracy of inquiry) does it take much wine to make him drunk ?" BOSWELL. " A great deal either of wine or strong punch." JOHNSON. " Then that is the worse." Probably he reasoned thus : " A fortress which soon surrenders has its walls less shattered than when a long and obstinate resistance is made."

He said, " Every man is to take existence on the terms on which it is given to him. To some men it is given on condition of not taking liberties, which other men may take without much harm. One may drink wine and be nothing the worse for it ; on an-



other, wine may have effects so inflammatory, as to injure him both in body and mind, and, perhaps, make him commit something for which he may deserve to be hanged."

Another time, Boswell, finding him still persevering in his abstinence from wine, ventured to speak to him of it. JOHNSON. "Sir, I have no objection to a man's drinking wine, if he can do it in moderation. I found myself apt to go to excess in it, and therefore, after having been for some time without it, on account of illness, I thought it better not to return to it. Every man is to judge for himself, according to the effects which he experiences. One of the fathers tells us, he found fasting made him so peevish, that he did not practise it."

Though he often enlarged upon the evil of intoxication, he was by no means harsh and unforgiving to those who indulged in occasional excess in wine. One of his friends came to sup at a tavern with him and some other gentlemen, and too plainly discovered that he had drank too much at dinner. When one who loved mischief, thinking to produce a severe censure, asked Johnson, a few days afterwards, "Well, sir, what did your friend say to you, as an apology for being in such a situation?" Johnson answered, "Sir, he said all that a man *should* say: he said he was sorry for it."

He gave a very judicious practical advice upon this subject: "A man who has been drinking wine at all freely should never go into a new company. With those who have partaken of wine with him, he may be pretty well in unison; but he will probably be offensive, or appear ridiculous, to other people."

“ On Wednesday, July 6,” says Boswell, “ he was engaged to sup with me at my lodgings in Downing-street, Westminster: but on the preceding night my landlord having behaved very rudely to me and some company who were with me, I had resolved not to remain another night in his house. I was exceedingly uneasy at the awkward appearance I supposed I should make to Johnson and the other gentlemen whom I had invited, not being able to receive them at home, and being obliged to order supper at the Mitre. I went to Johnson in the morning, and talked of it as of a serious distress. He laughed; and said, ‘ Consider, Sir, how insignificant this will appear a twelvemonth hence.’—Were this consideration to be applied to most of the little vexatious incidents of life, by which our quiet is too often disturbed, it would prevent many painful sensations. I have tried it frequently with good effect. ‘ There is nothing,’ continued he, ‘ in this mighty misfortune; nay, we shall be better at the Mitre.’ I told him, that I had been at sir John Fielding’s office, complaining of my landlord, and had been informed, that though I had taken my lodgings for a year, I might, upon proof of his bad behaviour, quit them when I pleased, without being under an obligation to pay rent for any longer time than while I possessed them. The fertility of Johnson’s mind could show itself even upon so small a matter as this. ‘ Why, sir,’ said he, ‘ I suppose this must be the law, since you have been told so in Bow-street. But if your landlord could hold you to your bargain, and the lodgings should be yours for a year, you may certainly use them as you think fit. So, sir, you may quarter two life-guardsmen upon him; or

you may send the greatest scoundrel you can find into your apartments ; or you may say, that you wish to make some experiments in natural philosophy, and may burn a large quantity of assafoetida in his house.'"

Boswell mentioned the advice given us by philosophers, to console ourselves, when distressed or embarrassed, by thinking of those who are in a worse situation than ourselves. This, he observed, could not apply to all, for there must be some who have nobody worse than they are. JOHNSON. " Why to be sure, sir, there are ; but they don't know it. There is no being so poor and so contemptible, who does not think there is somebody still poorer and still more contemptible."

He often enlarged upon the wretchedness of a sea life. " A ship is worse than a gaol. There is in a gaol better air, better company, better conveniency of every kind ; and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger. When men come to like a sea life, they are not fit to live on land." BOSWELL. " Then it would be cruel in a father to breed his son to the sea." JOHNSON. " It would be cruel in a father who thinks as I do. Men go to sea before they know the unhappiness of that way of life ; and when they have come to know it, they cannot escape from it, because it is then too late to choose another profession ; as indeed is generally the case with men, when they have once engaged in any particular way of life."

Talking of war : JOHNSON. " Every man thinks meanly of himself, for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea." BOSWELL. " Lord Mansfield does not." JOHNSON. " Sir, if lord Mansfield

were in a company of general officers and admirals who have been in service, he would shrink ; he'd wish to creep under the table." BOSWELL. " No, he'd think he could *try* them all." JOHNSON. " Yes, if he could catch them : but they'd try him much sooner. No, sir ; were Socrates and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden both present in any company, and Socrates to say, ' Follow me and hear a lecture in philosophy : ' and Charles, laying his hand on his sword, to say, ' Follow me, and dethrone the Czar ; ' a man would be ashamed to follow Socrates. Sir, the impression is universal : yet it is strange. As to the sailor, when you look down from the quarter-deck to the space below, you see the utmost extremity of human misery : such crowding, such filth, such stench !" BOSWELL. " Yet sailors are happy." JOHNSON. " They are happy as brutes are happy, with a piece of fresh meat,—with the grossest sensuality. But, sir, the profession of soldiers and sailors has the dignity of danger. Mankind reverence those who have got over fear, which is so general a weakness." SCOTT. " But is not courage mechanical, and to be acquired ? " JOHNSON. " Why yes, sir, in a collective sense. Soldiers consider themselves only as part of a great machine." SCOTT. " We find people fond of being sailors." JOHNSON. " I cannot account for that, any more than I can account for other strange perversions of imagination."

" His abhorrence of the profession of a sailor," says Boswell, " was uniformly violent ; but in conversation he always exalted the profession of a soldier : and yet I have, in my large and various collection of his writings, a letter to an eminent friend, in which

he expresses himself thus : ' My god-son called on me lately. He is weary, and rationally weary, of a military life. If you can place him in some other state, I think you may increase his happiness, and secure his virtue. A soldier's time is passed in distress and danger, or in idleness and corruption.' Such was his cool reflection in his study ; but whenever he was warmed and animated by the presence of company, he, like other philosophers, whose minds are impregnated with poetical fancy, caught the common enthusiasm for splendid renown."

Boswell having mentioned lord Charles Hay, with whom he knew Dr. Johnson had been acquainted. JOHNSON. " I wrote something for Lord Charles ; and I thought he had nothing to fear from a court-martial. I suffered a great loss when he died ; he was a mighty pleasing man in conversation, and a reading man. The character of a soldier is high. They who stand forth the foremost in danger for the community, have the respect of mankind. An officer is much more respected than any other man who has as little money. In a commercial country, money will always purchase respect : but you find, an officer who has, properly speaking, no money, is every where well received, and treated with attention. The character of a soldier always stands him in stead." BOSWELL. " Yet, sir, I think that common soldiers are worse thought of than other men in the same rank of life ; such as labourers." JOHNSON. " Why sir, a common soldier is usually a very gross man, and any quality which procures respect may be overwhelmed by grossness. A man of learning may be so vicious, that you cannot respect him. A common soldier too generally

eats more than he can pay for. But when a common soldier is civil in his quarters, his red coat procures him a degree of respect." The peculiar respect paid to the military character in France was mentioned. BOSWELL. "I should think, that where military men are so numerous, they would be less valued, as not being rare." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, wherever a particular character or profession is high in the estimation of a people, those who are of it will be valued above other men. We value an Englishman high in this country, and yet Englishmen are not rare in it."

The following is one of the many sketches of character which was treasured in his mind, and which he was wont to produce quite unexpectedly in a very entertaining manner. "I lately received a letter from the East-Indies from a gentleman whom I formerly knew very well; he had returned from that country with a handsome fortune, as it was reckoned, before means were found to acquire those immense sums which have been brought from thence of late; he was a scholar, and an agreeable man, and lived very prettily in London, till his wife died. After her death, he took to dissipation and gaming, and lost all he had. One evening he lost a thousand pounds to a gentleman whose name I am sorry I have forgotten. Next morning he sent the gentleman five hundred pounds, with an apology that it was all he had in the world. The gentleman sent the money back to him, declaring he would not accept of it; and adding, that if Mr. \* \* \* had occasion for five hundred pounds more, he would lend it to him. He resolved to go out again to the East Indies, and make his fortune anew. He got a con-

considerable appointment, and I had some intention of accompanying him. Had I thought then as I do now, I should have gone : but at that time I had objections to quitting England."

Boswell mentioned a new gaming-club, of which Mr. Beanclerk had given him an account, where the members played to a desperate extent. JOHNSON. "Depend upon it, sir, this is mere talk. *Who* is ruined by gaming? You will not find six instances in an age. There is a strange rout made about deep play : whereas you have many more ruined by adventurous trade, and yet we do not hear such an outcry against it." THRALE. "There may be few people absolutely ruined by deep play ; but very many are much hurt in their circumstances by it." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, and so are very many by other kinds of expense." Boswell adds, "I had heard him talk once before in the same manner ; and at Oxford he said, 'he wished he had learned to play at cards.' The truth, however, is, that he loved to display his ingenuity in argument, and therefore would sometimes in conversation maintain opinions, which he was sensible were wrong, but in supporting which, his reasoning and wit would be most conspicuous. He would begin thus : 'Why, sir, as to the good or evil of card-playing—' 'Now,' said Garrick, 'he is thinking which side he shall take.' He appeared to have a pleasure in contradiction, especially when any opinion whatever was delivered with an air of confidence ; so that there was hardly any topic, if not one of the great truths of religion and morality, that he might not have been incited to argue either for or against."

Johnson spoke of St. Kilda, the most remote of

the Hebrides. Boswell told him he thought of buying it. JOHNSON. "Pray do, sir. We will go and pass a winter amid the blasts there. We shall have fine fish, and we will take some dried tongues with us, and some books. We will have a strong built vessel, and some Orkney men to navigate her. We must build a tolerable house : but we may carry with us a wooden house ready made, and requiring nothing but to be put up. Consider, sir, by buying St. Kilda, you may keep the people from falling into worse hands. We must give them a clergyman, and he shall be one of Beattie's choosing. He shall be educated at Marischal college. I'll be your lord chancellor, or what you please." BOSWELL. "Are you serious, sir, in advising me to buy St. Kilda? for if you should advise me to go to Japan, I believe I should do it." JOHNSON. "Why, yes, sir, I am serious." BOSWELL. "Why, then, I'll see what can be done."

Boswell told Dr. Johnson he had been talking of him to Mr. Dunning a few days before, and had said, that in his company we did not so much interchange conversation, as listen to him ; and that Dunning observed, upon this, "One is always willing to listen to Dr. Johnson ;" to which Boswell answered, "That is a great deal from you, sir."—"Yes, sir," said Johnson, "a great deal indeed. Here is a man willing to listen, to whom the world is listening all the rest of the year." BOSWELL. "I think, sir, it is right to tell one man of such a handsome thing which has been said of him by another. It tends to increase benevolence." JOHNSON. "Undoubtedly, it is right, sir."

"I told him," says Boswell, "that our friend



Goldsmith had complained to me, that he had come too late into the world, for that Pope and other poets had taken up the places in the temple of Fame; so that as but a few at any period can possess poetical reputation, a man of genius can now hardly acquire it. JOHNSON. 'That is one of the most sensible things I have ever heard of Goldsmith. It is difficult to get literary fame, and it is every day growing more difficult.' "

Boswell described to him an impudent fellow from Scotland, who affected to be a savage, and railed at all established systems. JOHNSON. "There is nothing surprising in this, sir. He wants to make himself conspicuous. He would tumble in a hogsty, as long as you looked at him, and called to him to come out: but let him alone, never mind him, and he'll soon give it over." BOSWELL. "The same person maintains that there is no distinction between virtue and vice." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, if the fellow does not think as he speaks; he is lying; and I see not what honour he can propose to himself from having the character of a liar. But if he does really think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why, sir, when he leaves our houses, let us count our spoons."

Having come from the Pantheon, Boswell said there was not half-a-guinea's worth of pleasure in seeing that place. JOHNSON. "But, sir, there is half-a-guinea's worth of inferiority to other people in not having seen it." BOSWELL. "I doubt, sir, whether there are many happy people here." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, there are many happy people here. There are many people here who are watching hundreds, and who think hundreds are watching them."

Happening to meet sir Adam Ferguson, Boswell presented him to Dr. Johnson. Sir Adam expressed some apprehension that the Pantheon would encourage luxury. "Sir," said Johnson, "I am a great friend to public amusements; for they keep people from vice."

When one of his friends endeavoured to maintain that a country gentleman might contrive to pass his life very agreeably, "Sir," said he, "you cannot give me an instance of any man who is permitted to lay out his own time, contriving not to have tedious hours." This observation, however, is equally applicable to gentlemen who live in cities, and are of no profession.

Mr. Strahan talked of launching into the great ocean of London, in order to have a chance for rising into eminence; and observing, that many men were kept back from trying their fortunes there, because they were born to a competency, said, "Small certainties are the bane of men of talents;" which Johnson confirmed. Mr. Strahan put Johnson in mind of a remark which he had made to him—"There are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money." "The more one thinks of this," said Strahan, "the juster it will appear."

He disliked much all speculative desponding considerations, which tended to discourage men from diligence and exertion. He was in this like Dr. Shaw, the great traveller, who, according to Mr. Daines Barrington, used to say, "I hate a *cui bono* man." Upon being asked by a friend, what he should think of a man who was apt to say *non est tanti*;—"That he's a stupid fellow, sir;" answered

Johnson: "what would these *tanti* men be doing the while?" When Boswell, in a low-spirited fit, was talking to him with indifference of the pursuits which generally engage us in a course of action, and inquiring a *reason* for taking so much trouble; "Sir," said he, in an animated tone, "it is driving on the system of life."

When Boswell visited Lichfield in company with Johnson, very little business appeared to be going forward there. He found, however, two strange manufactures for so inland a place, sail-cloth and streamers for ships; and observed them making some saddle-cloths, and dressing sheep-skins: but upon the whole, the busy hand of industry seemed to be quite slackened. "Surely, sir," said Boswell, "you are an idle set of people." "Sir," said Johnson, "we are a city of philosophers; we work with our heads, and make the boobies of Birmingham work for us with their hands."

Upon the question, whether a man who had been guilty of vicious actions would do well to force himself into solitude and sadness? JOHNSON. "No, sir, unless it prevent him from being vicious again. With some people, gloomy penitence is only madness turned upside down. A man may be gloomy, till, in order to be relieved from gloom, he has recourse again to criminal indulgences."

Johnson called on Boswell with Mrs. Williams, in Mr. Strahan's coach, and carried him out to dine with Mr. Elphinstone, at his academy at Kensington. A printer having acquired a sufficient fortune to keep his coach was a good topic for the credit of literature. Mrs. Williams said, "That another printer, Mr. Hamilton, had not waited so long as Mr.

Strahan, but had kept his coach several years sooner." JOHNSON. "He was in the right; life is short: the sooner that a man begins to enjoy his wealth the better."

"Although upon most occasions," says Boswell, "I never heard a more strenuous advocate for the advantages of wealth than Dr. Johnson, he this day, I know not from what caprice, took the other side. 'I have not observed,' said he, 'that men of very large fortunes enjoy any thing extraordinary that makes happiness. What has the duke of Bedford? What has the duke of Devonshire? The only great instance that I have ever known of the enjoyment of wealth was that of Jamaica Dawkins, who going to visit Palmyra, and hearing that the way was infested by robbers, hired a troop of Turkish horse to guard him.'"

Talking of various enjoyments, Boswell argued, that a refinement of taste was a disadvantage, as they who have attained to it must be seldomer pleased than those who have no nice discrimination, and are therefore satisfied with every thing that comes in their way. JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, that is a paltry notion: endeavour to be as perfect as you can in every respect."

He gave the following singular history of an ingenious acquaintance. "He had practised physie in various situations with no great emolument. A West-India gentleman, whom he delighted by his conversation, gave him a bond for a handsome annuity during his life, on the condition of his accompanying him to the West-Indies, and living with him there for two years. He accordingly embarked

with the gentleman ; but upon the voyage fell in love with a young woman who happened to be one of the passengers, and married the wench. From the imprudence of his disposition he quarrelled with the gentleman, and declared he would have no connexion with him ; so he forfeited the annuity. He settled as a physician in one of the Leeward islands. A man was sent to him merely to compound his medicines. This fellow set up as a rival to him in his practice of physic, and got so much the better of him in the opinion of the people of the island, that he carried away all the business ; upon which he returned to England, and soon after died."

On the subject of wealth, the proper use of it, and the effect of that art which is called economy, he observed, " It is wonderful to think how men of very large estates not only spend their yearly incomes, but are often actually in want of money. It is clear they have not value for what they spend. Lord Shelburne told me, that a man of high rank, who looks into his own affairs, may have all that he ought to have, all that can be of any use, or appear with any advantage, for five thousand pounds a year : therefore a great proportion must go in waste ; and, indeed, this is the case with most people, whatever their fortune is." BOSWELL. " I have no doubt, sir, of this ; but how is it ? What is waste ?" JOHNSON. " Why, sir, breaking bottles, and a thousand other things. Waste cannot be accurately told, though we are sensible how destructive it is. Economy on the one hand, by which a certain income is made to maintain a man genteely, and waste on the other, by which, on the same income, another man

**lives shabbily, cannot be defined. It is a very nice thing ; as one man wears his coat out much sooner than another, we cannot tell how."**

**He advised Dr. Maxwell, if possible, to have a good orchard. "He knew," he said, "a clergyman of small income, who brought up a family very respectably, which he chiefly fed with apple dumplings."**

**He said, "Get as much force of mind as you can. Live within your income. Always have something saved at the end of the year. Let your imports be more than your exports, and you'll never go far wrong."**

### No. XIII.

### LONDON.

**OF London, Johnson observed, "Sir, if you wish to have a just notion of the magnitude of the city, you must not be satisfied with seeing its great streets and squares, but must survey the innumerable little lanes and courts. It is not in the showy evolutions of buildings, but in the multiplicity of human habitations which are crowded together, that the wonderful immensity of London consists." "I have often amused myself," adds Boswell, "with thinking how different a place London is to different people. They, whose narrow minds are contracted to the consideration of some one-particular pursuit, view it only through that medium. A politician thinks of it merely as the seat of government in its different departments ; a grazier, as a vast market**

for cattle ; a mercantile man, as a place where a prodigious deal of business is done upon Change ; a dramatic enthusiast, as the grand scene of theatrical entertainments ; a man of pleasure, as an assemblage of taverns, and the great emporium for ladies of easy virtue : but the intellectual man is struck with it, as comprehending the whole of human life in all its variety, the contemplation of which is inexhaustible."

Johnson had a little money when he came to London ; and he knew how he could live in the cheapest manner. His first lodgings were at the house of Mr. Norris, a stay-maker, in Exeter street, adjoining Catherine street, in the Strand. " I dined," said he, " very well, for eight-pence, with very good company, at the Pine-Apple in New-street, just by. Several of them had travelled : they expected to meet every day, but did not know one another's names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine : but I had a cut of meat for six-pence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny ; so that I was quite well served, nay, better than the rest, for they gave the waiter nothing

How Johnson employed himself upon his first coming to London is not particularly known. A curious anecdote was communicated by himself to Mr. John Nichols. Mr. Wilson, the bookseller, on being informed by him that his intention was to get his livelihood as an author, eyed his robust frame attentively, and, with a significant look, said, " You had better buy a porter's knot." He however added, " Wilson was one of my best friends."

His Ofellus, in the Art of living in London, was an Irish painter, whom he knew at Birmingham,

and who had practised his own precepts of economy for several years in the British capital. He assured Johnson, who was then meditating to try his fortune in London, but was apprehensive of the expense, "that thirty pounds a year was enough to enable a man to live there without being contemptible. He allowed ten pounds for clothes and linen. He said a man might live in a garret at eighteen-pence a week; few people would inquire where he lodged; and if they did, it was easy to say, 'Sir, I am to be found at such a place.' By spending three-pence in a coffee-house, he might be for some hours every day in very good company; he might dine for sixpence, breakfast on bread and milk for a penny, and do without supper. On *clean-shirt-day* he went abroad, and paid visits." He more than once talked of his frugal friend, whom he recollected with esteem and kindness, and did not like to have one smile at the recital. "This man," said he, gravely, "was a very sensible man, who perfectly understood common affairs: a man of a great deal of knowledge of the world, fresh from life, not strained through books. He borrowed a horse and ten pounds at Birmingham. Finding himself master of so much money, he set off for West Chester, in order to get to Ireland. He returned the horse, and probably the ten pounds too, after he got home."

Considering Johnson's narrow circumstances in the early part of his life, and particularly at the interesting æra of his launching into the ocean of London, it is not to be wondered at, that an actual instance, proved by experience, of the possibility of enjoying the intellectual luxury of social life upon a



very small income, should deeply engage his attention, and be ever recollected by him as a circumstance of much importance. He afterward amused himself occasionally by computing how much more expense was absolutely necessary, to live upon the same scale with that which his friend described, when the value of money was diminished by the progress of commerce. How much would be sufficient now others may calculate.

He related the following minute anecdote of this period: "In the last age, when my mother lived in London, there were two sets of people, those who gave the wall, and those who took it; the peaceable and the quarrelsome. When I returned to Lichfield, after having been in London, my mother asked me, whether I was one of those that gave the wall, or those who took it. *Now* it is fixed that every man keeps to the right; or, if one is taking the wall, another yields it; and it is never a dispute."

Talking of a London life, he said, "The happiness of London is not to be conceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say, there is more learning and science within the circumference of ten miles from where we now sit, than in all the rest of the kingdom." BOSWELL. "The only disadvantage is the great distance at which people live from one another." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, but that is occasioned by the largeness of it, which is the cause of all the other advantages." BOSWELL. "Sometimes I have been in the humour of wishing to retire to a desert." JOHNSON. "Sir, you have desert enough in Scotland."

Walking one evening in Greenwich Park, he

asked Boswell, by way of trying his disposition, "Is not this very fine?" Boswell, having no exquisite relish of the beauties of nature, and being more delighted with "the busy hum of men," answered, "Yes, sir; but not equal to Fleet-street." JOHNSON. "You are right, sir." Johnson and his friend appear to have agreed in taste with a baronet very fashionable in the brilliant world, sir Michael le Fleming, who, on his attention being called to the fragrance of a May evening in the country, observed; "This may be very well; but, for my part, I prefer the smell of a flambeau at the playhouse."

Johnson was much attached to London: he observed, that a man stored his mind better there than any where else; and that in remote situations a man's body might be feasted, but his mind was starved, and his faculties apt to degenerate, from want of exercise and competition. No place, he said, cured a man's vanity or arrogance so well as London; for as no man was either great or good *per se*, but as compared with others not so good or great, he was sure to find in the metropolis many his equals, and some his superiors. He observed, that a man in London was in less danger of falling in love indiscreetly than any where else; for there the difficulty of deciding between the conflicting pretensions of a vast variety of objects kept him safe. He had frequently been offered country preferment, if he would consent to take orders; but he could not leave the improved society of the capital, or consent to exchange the exhilarating joys and splendid decorations of public life, for the obscurity, insipidity, and uniformity of remote situations.

He was not desirous, however, of a benefice in London; "for," he remarked, "a London parish is a very comfortless thing; as the clergyman seldom knows the face of one out of ten of his parishioners."

Dining at the Mitre, *tête-à-tête* with Dr. Maxwell, who was preparing to return to Ireland, after an absence of many years, he regretted much leaving London, where he had formed many agreeable connexions: "Sir," said he, "I don't wonder at it; no man, fond of letters, leaves London without regret. But remember, sir, you have seen and enjoyed a great deal; you have seen life in its highest decorations, and the world has nothing new to exhibit. No man is so well qualified to leave public life as he who has long tried it and known it well. We are always hankering after untried situations, and imagining greater felicity from them than they can afford. No, sir, knowledge and virtue may be acquired in all countries, and your local consequence will make you some amends for the intellectual gratifications you relinquish." Then he quoted the following lines with great pathos:

He who has early known the pomps of state,  
(For things unknown 'tis ignorance to condemn;)   
And after having viewed the gaudy bait,  
Can boldly say, "The trifle I condemn;"   
With such a one contented could I live,  
Contented could I die.

He then took a very affecting leave of the doctor, said he knew it was a point of *duty* that called him away, and added, "We shall be sorry to lose you: *laudo tamen*."

It having been observed that there was little hospitality in London : JOHNSON. " Nay, sir, any man who has a name or who has the power of pleasing, will be generally invited in London. The man Sterne, I have been told, has had engagements for three months." GOLDSMITH. " And a very dull fellow." JOHNSON. " Why, no, sir."

He said, " London is nothing to some people ; but to a man whose pleasure is intellectual, London is the place. And there is no-place where economy can be so well practised as in London : more can be had here for the money, even by ladies, than any where else. You cannot play tricks with your fortune in a small place ; you must make an uniform appearance. Here a lady may have well-furnished apartments, and elegant dress, without any meat in her kitchen."

" I was amused," adds Boswell, " by considering with how much ease and coolness he could write or talk to a friend, exhorting him not to suppose that happiness was not to be found as well in other places as in London ; when he himself was at all times sensible of its being, comparatively speaking, a heaven upon earth. The truth is, that by those who, from sagacity, attention, and experience, have learnt the full advantage of London, its pre-eminence over every other place, not only for variety of enjoyment, but for comfort, will be felt with a philosophical exultation. The freedom from remark and petty censure, with which life may be passed there, is a circumstance which a man who knows the teasing restraint of a narrow circle must relish highly. Mr. Burke, whose orderly and amiable domestic habits might make the eye of obser-

vation less irksome to him than to most men, said once very pleasantly, in my hearing, ' Though I have the honour to represent Bristol, I should not like to live there ; I should be obliged to be so much *upon my good behaviour.*' In London, a man may live in splendid society at one time, and in frugal retirement at another, without animadversion. There, and there alone, a man's own house is truly his *castle*, in which he can be in perfect safety from intrusion whenever he pleases. I never shall forget how well this was expressed to me one day by Mr. Meynell ; ' The chief advantage of London,' said he, ' is, that a man is always *so near his burrow.*' "

To Boswell he said : " It is wonderful, sir, what is to be found in London. The most literary conversation that I ever enjoyed, was at the table of Jack Ellis, a money-scrivener behind the Royal Exchange, with whom I at one period used to dine generally once a week."

As Boswell and Johnson walked to St. Clement's church, and saw several shops open upon the most solemn fast-day of the Christian world, Boswell remarked, that one disadvantage arising from the immensity of London, was, that nobody was heeded by his neighbour ; there was no fear of censure for not observing Good-Friday, as it ought to be kept, and as it is kept in country-towns. Johnson said, it was, upon the whole, very well observed even in London. He, however, owned that London was too large ; but added, " It is nonsense to say the head is too big for the body. It would be as much too big, though the body were ever so large ; that is to say, though the country were ever so exten-

sive. It has no similarity to a head connected with a body."

Boswell talked of the cheerfulness of Fleet-street, owing to the constant quick succession of people which we perceive passing through it. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, Fleet-street has a very animated appearance; but I think the full tide of human existence is at Charing-cross."

#### No. XIV.

#### MANNERS.

THOUGH of no high extraction himself, Johnson had much respect for birth and family, especially among ladies. He said, "Adventitious accomplishments may be professed by all ranks; but one may easily distinguish the *born gentlewoman*."

The same feeling probably much influenced his attachment to Mr. Langton and Mr. Beauclerk, two gay young men of good birth. Johnson, at first, thought it strange that Langton should associate so much with one who had the character of being loose, both in his principles and practice: but, by degrees, he himself was fascinated. Mr. Beauclerk's being of the St. Albans family, and having, in some particulars, a resemblance to Charles the Second, contributed, in Johnson's imagination, to throw a lustre upon his other qualities; and, in a short time, the moral, pious Johnson, and the gay, dissipated Beauclerk, were companions. "What a coalition!" said Garrick, when he heard of this:

"I shall have my old friend to bail out of the round-house." But it was a very agreeable association. Beauclerk was too polite, and valued learning and wit too much, to offend Johnson by sallies of infidelity or licentiousness; and Johnson delighted in the good qualities of Beauclerk, and hoped to correct the evil. Innumerable were the scenes in which Johnson was amused by these young men. Beauclerk could take more liberty with him than any body; but, on the other hand, Beauclerk was not spared by his respectable companion, when reproof was proper. Beauclerk had such a propensity to satire, that at one time Johnson said to him, "You never open your mouth but with intention to give pain: and you have often given me pain, not from the power of what you said, but from seeing your intention." At another time, applying to him, with a slight alteration, a line of Pope, he said,

"Thy love of folly, and thy scorn of fools—

Every thing thou dost shows the one, and every thing thou sayest the other." At another time, he said to him, "Thy body is all vice, and thy mind all virtue." Beauclerk not seeming to relish the compliment, Johnson said, "Nay, sir, Alexander the Great, marching in triumph into Babylon, could not have desired to have had more said to him."

Johnson was some time with Beauclerk at his house at Windsor, where he was entertained with experiments in natural philosophy. One Sunday,

when the weather was very fine, Beauclerk enticed him, insensibly, to saunter about all the morning. They went into a church-yard, in the time of divine service, and Johnson laid himself down at his ease upon one of the tomb-stones. "Now, sir," said Beauclerk, "you are like Hogarth's Idle Apprentice." When Johnson got his pension, Beauclerk said to him, in the humorous phrase of Falstaff, "I hope you'll now purge and live cleanly, like a gentleman."

One night, when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the door of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head, instead of a nightcap, and a poker in his hand, imagining, probably, that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good humour agreed to their proposal: "What, is it you, you dogs? I'll have a frisk with you." He was soon dressed, and they sallied forth together into Covent-garden, where the green-grocers and fruiterers were beginning to arrange their hampers, just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them; but the honest gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called *bishop*, which Johnson had always liked:



while in joyous contempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines,

Short, O short then be thy reign,  
And give us to the world again !

They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, took a boat, and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerk and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day : but Langton deserted them, being engaged to breakfast with some young ladies. Johnson scolded him for "leaving his social friends, to go and sit with a set of wretched *un-idea'd* girls." Garrick being told of this ramble, said to him smartly, "I heard of your frolic t'other night. You'll be in the Chronicle." Upon which Johnson afterwards observed, "*He* durst not do such a thing. His *wife* would not *let* him."

On occasion of his play of Irene being brought upon the stage, Johnson had a fancy, that as a dramatic author, his dress should be more gay than what he ordinarily wore ; he therefore appeared behind the scenes, and even in one of the side boxes, in a scarlet waistcoat, with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. He humorously observed to Mr. Langton, "that when in that dress he could not treat people with the same ease as when in his usual plain clothes."

Sir Joshua Reynolds told a pleasant characteristical anecdote of Johnson about the time of their first acquaintance. When they were one evening together at the Miss Cotterells', the duchess of

Argyle and another lady of high rank came in. Johnson thinking that the Miss Cotterells were too much engrossed by them, and that he and his friend were neglected, as low company of whom they were somewhat ashamed, grew angry; and resolving to shock their supposed pride, by making their great visitors imagine that his friend and he were low indeed, he addressed himself in a loud tone to Mr. Reynolds, saying, "How much do you think you and I could get in a week, if we were to *work as hard* as we could?" as if they had been common mechanics.

To a lady who endeavoured to vindicate herself from blame for neglecting social attention to worthy neighbours, by saying, "I would go to them if it would do them any good;" he said, "What good, madam, do you expect to have in your power to do them? It is showing them respect, and that is doing them good."

So socially accommodating was he, that once when Mr. Langton and he were driving together in a coach, and Mr. Langton complained of being sick, he insisted that they should go out, and sit on the back of it in the open air, which they did: and being sensible how strange the appearance must be, observed, that a countryman whom they saw in a field would probably be thinking, "If these two madmen should come down, what would become of me?"

Mr. Strahan mentions a little circumstance of attention, which must be allowed to have its foundation in a nice and true knowledge of human life. "When I write to Scotland," said Johnson, "I employ Strahan to frank my letters, that he may

have the consequence of appearing a parliament-man among his countrymen."

Sir Joshua Reynolds relates a very characteristic anecdote of Johnson while at Plymouth. Having observed, that in consequence of the Dock-yard, a new town had arisen about two miles off as a rival to the old ; and knowing, from his sagacity, and just observation of human nature, that it is certain, if a man hates at all, he will hate his next neighbour ; he concluded that this new and rising town could not but excite the envy and jealousy of the old, in which conjecture he was very soon confirmed ; he therefore set himself resolutely on the side of the old town, the *established* town, in which his lot was cast, considering it as a kind of duty to *stand by* it. He accordingly entered warmly into its interests, and upon every occasion talked of the *dockers*, as the inhabitants of the new town were called, as upstarts and aliens. Plymouth is very plentifully supplied with water by a river brought into it from a great distance, which is so abundant that it runs to waste in the town. The Dock, or New Town, being totally destitute of water, petitioned Plymouth that a small portion of the conduit might be permitted to go to them ; and this was now under consideration. Johnson, affecting to entertain the passions of the place, was violent in opposition ; and half-laughing at himself for his pretended zeal, where he had no concern, exclaimed, " No, no : I am against the *dockers* ; I am a Plymouth-man. Rogues ! let them die of thirst. They shall not have a drop ! "

Johnson talked of that studied behaviour which many have recommended and practised. He dis-

approved of it, and said, "I never considered whether I should be a grave man, or a merry man, but just let inclination, for the time, have its course."

He had upon the dial-plate of his watch a short Greek inscription, taken from the New Testament, *Νῦν γὰρ σπύρειται*, being the first words of our Saviour's solemn admonition to the improvement of that time which is allowed us to prepare for eternity: "the night cometh when no man can work." He sometime afterwards laid aside this dial-plate; and when asked the reason, he said, "It might do very well upon a clock, which a man keeps in his closet—but to have it upon his watch, which he carries about with him, and which is often looked at by others, might be censured as ostentatious."

He was so ceremonious, that he refused to go out of a room before Dr. Maxwell, at Mr. Langton's house, saying, he hoped he knew his rank better than to presume to take place of a doctor in divinity. Yet, at times, he was grossly rude; and, when exasperated by contradiction, was apt to treat his opponents with too much acrimony; as, "Sir, you don't see your way through that question;" "Sir, you talk the language of ignorance."

Sir John Hawkins having refused to pay his portion of the reckoning for supper, because he usually ate no supper at home, Johnson observed, "Sir John, sir, is a very *unctubable* man."

Though by no means niggardly, his attention to what was generally right was so minute, that having observed, at one of the stages, that Boswell ostentatiously gave a shilling to the coachman, when

the custom was for each passenger to give only sixpence, he took him aside, and scolded him, saying, that what he had done would make the coachman dissatisfied with all the rest of the passengers, who gave him no more than his due. This was a just reprimand; for in whatever way a man may indulge his generosity or his vanity in spending his money, for the sake of others he ought not to raise the price of any article, for which there is a constant demand.

Mrs. Thrale was short, plump, and brisk. She has herself given us a lively view of the idea which Johnson had of her person, on her appearing before him in a dark-coloured gown: "You little creatures should never wear those sort of clothes, however; they are unsuitable in every way. What! have not all insects gay colours?"

He said, foppery was never cured; it was the bad stamina of the mind, which, like those of the body, were never rectified; once a coxcomb, and always a coxcomb.

A gentleman attacked Garrick for being vain. JOHNSON. "No wonder, sir, that he is vain; a man who is perpetually flattered in every mode that can be conceived! So many bellows have blown the fire, that one wonders he is not by this time become a cinder." BOSWELL. "And such bellows too: lord Mansfield with his cheeks like to burst: lord Chatham like an *Æolus*: I have read such notes from them to him, as were enough to turn his head." JOHNSON. "True: when he whom every body else flatters, flatters me, I then am truly happy." MRS. THRALE. "The sentiment is in

Congreve, I think." JOHNSON. "Yes, madam, in The Way of the World :

'If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see  
That heart which others bleed for, bleed for me.'

Boswell won a small bet from lady Diana Beauclerk, by asking Johnson as to one of his particularities, which her ladyship laid he durst not do. He had been frequently observed at the club to put into his pocket the Seville oranges, after he had squeezed the juice of them into the drink which he made for himself. Beauclerk and Garrick talked of it to Boswell, and seemed to think that he had a strange unwillingness to be discovered. They could not divine what he did with them ; and this was the bold question to be put. Seeing on his table the spoils of the preceding night, some fresh peels nicely scraped and cut into pieces, Boswell said, "O, sir, I now partly see what you do with the squeezed oranges which you put into your pocket at the club." JOHNSON. "I have a great love for them." BOSWELL. "And pray, sir, what do you do with them? You scrape them, it seems, very neatly; and what next?" JOHNSON. "Let them dry, sir." BOSWELL. "And what next?" JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, you shall know their fate no farther." BOSWELL. "Then the world must be left in the dark. It must be said (assuming a mock solemnity,) he scraped them, and let them dry, but what he did with them next, he never could be prevailed upon to tell." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, you should say it more emphatically:—he could not be prevailed upon, even by his dearest friends, to tell."

Johnson observed, that the force of our early

habits was so great, that though reason approved, nay, though our senses relished a different course—almost every man returned to them.

Talking of a young gentleman's marriage with an eminent singer, and his determination that she should no longer sing in public, though his father was very earnest she should, because her talents would be liberally rewarded, so as to make her a good fortune; it was questioned whether the young gentleman, who had not a shilling in the world, but was blessed with very uncommon talents, was not foolishly delicate, or foolishly proud, and his father truly rational, without being mean. Johnson, with all the high spirit of a Roman senator, exclaimed, "He resolved wisely and nobly to be sure: he is a brave man. Would not a gentleman be disgraced by having his wife singing publicly for hire? No, sir, there can be no doubt here. I know not if I should not *prepare* myself for a public singer, as readily as let my wife be one."

The family likeness of the Garricks was very striking; and Johnson thought that David's vivacity was not so peculiar to himself as was supposed. "Sir," said he, "I don't know but if Peter had cultivated all the arts of gaiety as much as David has done, he might have been as brisk and lively. Depend upon it, sir, vivacity is much an art, and depends greatly on habit." Boswell adds: "I believe there is a good deal of truth in this, notwithstanding a ludicrous story told me by a lady abroad, of a heavy German baron, who had lived much with the young English at Geneva, and was ambitious to be as lively as they; with which view, he, with assiduous exertion, was jumping over the tables and

chairs in his lodgings; and when the people of the house ran in, and asked, with surprise, what was the matter? he answered—*‘Sh’ apprens t’ être Af.’*”

Johnson said, “Mrs. Williams was angry, that Thrale’s family did not send regularly to her every time they heard from me while I was in the Hebrides. Little people are apt to be jealous; but they should not be jealous: for they ought to consider, that superior attention will necessarily be paid to superior fortune or rank. Two persons may have equal merit, and on that account may have equal claim to attention; but one of them may have also fortune and rank, and so may have a double claim.”

Boswell happened to start a question, whether, when a man knows that some of his intimate friends are invited to the house of another friend, with whom they are all equally intimate, he may join them without an invitation. JOHNSON. “No, sir; he is not to go when he is not invited: they may be invited on purpose to abuse him.”—(smiling.)

At a dinner party, one of the company not being come at the appointed hour, the master of the house proposed, as usual upon such occasions, to order dinner to be served; adding, “Ought six people to be kept waiting for one?” “Why, yes,” answered Johnson, with a delicate humanity, “if the one will suffer more by your sitting down, than the six will do by waiting.”

He said, “Lord Chesterfield’s Letters to his Son, I think, might be made a very pretty book. Take out the immorality, and it should be put into the hands of every young gentleman. An elegant man-



ner and easiness of behaviour are acquired gradually and imperceptibly. No man can say, 'I'll be genteel.' There are ten genteel women for one genteel man, because they are more restrained. A man without some degree of restraint is insufferable; but we are all less restrained than women. Were a woman, sitting in company, to put out her legs before her as most men do, we should be tempted to kick them in." No man was a more attentive and nice observer of behaviour in those in whose company he happened to be, than Johnson; or, however strange it may seem to many, had a higher estimation of its refinements. Lord Eliot tells us, that one day when Johnson and he were at dinner in a gentleman's house in London, upon Lord Chesterfield's Letters being mentioned, Johnson surprised the company by this sentence—"Every man of any education would rather be called a rascal, than accused of deficiency in *the graces*." Mr. Gibbon, who was present, turned to a lady who knew Johnson well, and lived much with him, and in his quaint manner, tapping his box, addressed her thus: "Don't you think, madam, (looking towards Johnson) that among *all* your acquaintance you could find *one* exception?" The lady smiled, and seemed to acquiesce.

In a small party, Dr. Johnson, as usual, spoke contemptuously of Colley Cibber. "It is wonderful that a man, who for forty years had lived with the great and the witty, should have acquired so ill the talents of conversation; and he had but half to furnish; for one half of what he said was oaths." He, however, allowed considerable merit to some of his comedies, and said there was no reason to believe

that the Careless Husband was not written by himself. Davies said, he was the first dramatic writer who introduced genteel ladies upon the stage. Johnson refuted his observation, by instancing several such characters in comedies before his time.

DAVIES—(trying to defend himself from a charge of ignorance.) “I mean genteel moral characters.”

HICKY. “I think gentility and morality are inseparable.” BOSWELL. “By no means, sir; the genteeldest characters are often the most immoral.

Does not lord Chesterfield give precepts for uniting wickedness and the graces? A man, indeed, is not genteel when he gets drunk; but most vices may be committed very genteelly; a man may debauch his friend's wife genteelly; he may cheat at cards genteelly.” HICKY. “I do not think *that* is genteel.”

BOSWELL. “Sir, it may not be like a gentleman, but it may be genteel.” JOHNSON. “You are

meaning two different things: one means exterior grace—the other honour. It is certain that a man may be very immoral with exterior grace. Lovelace, in *Clarissa*, is a very genteel and a very wicked character. Tom Hervey, who died t'other day, though a vicious man, was one of the genteeldest men that ever lived.” Tom Davies instanced

Charles the Second. JOHNSON—(taking fire at any attack upon that prince, for whom he had an extraordinary partiality.) “Charles the Second was licentious in his practice, but he always had a reverence for what was good. Charles the Second knew his people; and rewarded merit. The church was at no time better filled than in his reign. He was the best king we have had from his time till the reign of his present majesty, except James the Se-

cond, who was a very good king—but unhappily believed that it was necessary, for the salvation of his subjects, that they should be Roman Catholics. *He* had the merit of endeavouring to do what he thought was for the salvation of the souls of his subjects, till he lost a great empire. *We*, who thought that we should *not* be saved if we were Roman Catholics, had the merit of maintaining our religion, at the expense of submitting ourselves to the government of king William, for it could not be done otherwise; to the government of one of the most worthless scoundrels that ever existed. No; Charles the Second was not such a man as — (naming another king). He did not destroy his father's will. He took money, indeed, from France; but he did not betray those over whom he ruled: he did not let the French fleet pass ours. George the First knew nothing, and desired to know nothing; did nothing, and desired to do nothing; and the only good thing that is told of him is, that he wished to restore the crown to its hereditary successor." He roared with prodigious violence against George the Second. When he ceased, Moody interjected, in an Irish tone, and with a comic look, "Ah, poor George the Second!"

Dr. Johnson said that general Paoli had the loftiest port of any man he had ever seen. He denied that military men were always the best bred men. "Perfect good breeding," he observed, "consists in having no particular mark of any profession, but a general elegance of manners: whereas, in a military man, you can commonly distinguish the *brand* of a soldier, *l'homme d'épée*."

Boswell started the question, whether duelling

was consistent with moral duty. The brave old general Oglethorpe fired at this, and said, with a lofty air, "Undoubtedly, a man has a right to defend his honour." GOLDSMITH, turning to Boswell, "I ask you first, sir, what would you do if you were affronted?" BOSWELL. "I should think it necessary to fight." GOLDSMITH. "Why, then, that solves the question." JOHNSON: "No, sir, it does not solve the question, that what a man would do is therefore right." Boswell said, he wished to have it settled, whether duelling was contrary to the laws of Christianity. Johnson immediately entered on the subject, and treated it in a masterly manner; and so far as the narrator could recollect, his thoughts were these: "Sir, as men become in a high degree refined, various causes of offence arise; which are considered to be of such importance, that life must be staked to atone for them, though, in reality, they are not so. A body that has received a very fine polish may easily be hurt. Before men arrive at this artificial refinement, if one tells his neighbour he lies, his neighbour tells him he lies; if one gives his neighbour a blow, his neighbour gives him a blow: but in a state of highly polished society, an affront is held to be a serious injury; it must therefore be resented—or rather a duel must be fought upon it; as men have agreed to banish from their society one who puts up with an affront without fighting a duel. Now, sir, it is never unlawful to fight in self-defence. He, then, who fights a duel, does not fight from passion against his antagonist, but out of self-defence; to avert the stigma of the world, and to prevent him-

self from being driven out of society. I could wish there was not that superfluity of refinement; but while such notions prevail, no doubt a man may lawfully fight a duel."

Let it be remembered, that this justification is applicable only to the person who *receives* an affront. All mankind must condemn the aggressor.

The general told the company, that when he was a very young man, serving under prince Eugene of Savoy, he was sitting in a company at table with a prince of Wirtemberg: the prince took up a glass of wine, and, by a fillip, made some of it fly in Oglethorpe's face. Here was a nice dilemma; to have challenged him instantly, might have fixed a quarrelsome character upon the young soldier; to have taken no notice of it, might have been considered as cowardice. Oglethorpe, therefore, keeping his eye upon the prince, and smiling all the time, as if he took what his highness had done in jest, said in French, "My prince, that's a good joke; but we do it much better in England;" and threw a whole glass of wine in the prince's face. An old general who sat by said, "*Il a bien fait, mon prince, vous l'avez commencé:*" and thus all ended in good humour.

Johnson another day again defended duelling, and put his argument upon what may be thought the most solid basis; that, if public war be allowed to be consistent with morality, private war must be equally so. Indeed we may observe what strained arguments are used to reconcile war with the Christian religion. But it is exceedingly clear, that duelling, having better reasons for its barbarous violence,

is more justifiable than war, in which thousands go forth, without any cause of personal quarrel, and massacre each other.

When Mr. Vesey was proposed as a member of the Literary Club, Mr. Burke began by saying, that he was a man of gentle manners. "Sir," said Johnson, "you need say no more: when you have said a man of gentle manners, you have said enough."

The late Mr. Fitzherbert told Mr. Langton that Johnson said to him, "Sir, a man has no more right to *say* an uncivil thing, than to *act* one; no more right to say a rude thing to another, than to knock him down."

## No. XV.

## CONVERSATION.

ON this subject, Johnson laid down the following general rules: "Never speak of a man in his own presence; it is always indelicate, and may be offensive. Questioning is not the mode of conversation among gentlemen: it is assuming a superiority; and it is particularly wrong to question a man concerning himself; there may be parts of his former life which he may not wish to be made known to other persons, or even brought to his own recollection. A man should be careful never to tell tales of himself to his own disadvantage: people may be amused, and laugh at the time, but they will be remembered, and brought up against him upon some subsequent occasion."

The uncommon vivacity of general Oglethorpe's mind, and variety of knowledge, having sometimes made his conversation seem too desultory, Johnson observed, "Oglethorpe, sir, never *completes* what he has to say."

He, on the same account, made a similar remark on Patrick lord Elibank: "Sir, there is nothing *conclusive* in his talk."

When Boswell complained of having dined at a splendid table without hearing one sentence of conversation worthy of being remembered, he said, "Sir, there seldom is any such conversation." BOSWELL. "Why then meet at table?" JOHNSON. "Why, to eat and drink together, and to promote kindness; and, sir, this is better done when there is no solid conversation: for when there is, people differ in opinion, and get into bad humour, or some of the company, who are not capable of such conversation, are left out, and feel themselves uneasy. It was for this reason sir Robert Walpole said, he always talked bawdy at his table, because in that all could join."

Being irritated by hearing a gentleman ask Mr. Levet a variety of questions concerning him, when he was sitting by, he broke out, "Sir, you have but two topics, yourself and me: I am sick of both." "A man," said he, "should not talk of himself, nor much of any particular person: he should take care not to be made a proverb; and, therefore, should avoid having any one topic of which people can say, 'We shall hear him upon it.' There was a Dr. Oldfield, who was always talking of the duke of Marlborough: he came into a coffee-house one day, and told that his grace had spoken in the house

of lords for half an hour. 'Did he indeed speak for half an hour?' said Belchier, the surgeon.—'Yes.'—'And what did he say of Dr. Oldfield?'—'Nothing.'—'Why then, sir, he was very ungrateful; for Dr. Oldfield could not have spoken for a quarter of an hour, without saying something of him.' "

A learned gentleman, who, in the course of conversation, wished to communicate this simple fact, that the counsel upon the circuit of Shrewsbury were much bitten by fleas, took seven or eight minutes in relating it circumstantially. In the plenitude of phrase he related that large bales of woollen cloth were lodged in the town-hall; that, by reason of this, fleas nestled there in prodigious numbers; that the lodgings of the counsel were near the town-hall; and that those little animals moved from place to place with wonderful agility. Johnson sat in great impatience till the gentleman had finished his tedious narrative, and then burst out (playfully however,)—"It is a pity, sir, that you have not seen a lion; for a flea has taken you such a time, that a lion must have served you a twelvemonth."

Boswell having expressed his regret that Goldsmith would, upon every occasion, endeavour to shine, by which he often exposed himself. LANGTON. "He is not like Addison, who was content with the fame of his writings; he did not aim also at excellence in conversation, for which he found himself unfit; and said to a lady, who complained of his having talked little in company, 'Madam, I have but ninepence in ready money, but I can draw for a thousand pounds.' " BOSWELL. "Goldsmith has a great deal of gold in his cabinet; but not content



with this, he is always taking out his purse." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, and that so often an empty purse!"

Of the same celebrated author, Johnson said, "He is not an agreeable companion, for he talks always for fame: a man who does so never can be pleasing. The man who talks to unburthen his mind is the man to delight you. An eminent friend of ours is not so agreeable as the variety of his knowledge would otherwise make him, because he talks partly from ostentation."

Again: "The misfortune of Goldsmith in conversation is this—he goes on without knowing how he is to get off. His genius is great, but his knowledge is small. As they say of a generous man, it is a pity he is not rich, we may say of Goldsmith, it is a pity he is not knowing: he would not keep his knowledge to himself."

And on another occasion: "Goldsmith should not be for ever attempting to shine in conversation: he has not temper for it, he is so much mortified when he fails. Sir, a game of jokes is composed partly of skill, partly of chance; a man may be beat at times by one who has not the tenth part of his wit. Now Goldsmith's putting himself against another, is like a man laying a hundred to one who cannot spare the hundred: it is not worth a man's while. A man should not lay a hundred to one, unless he can easily spare it, though he has a hundred chances for him: he can get but a guinea, and he may lose a hundred. Goldsmith is in this state. When he contends, if he gets the better, it is a very little addition to a man of his literary reputation; if he does not get the better, he is miserably vexed."

Johnson's own superlative powers of wit set him above any risk of such uneasiness. Garrick had remarked of him, a few days before, "Rabelais and all other wits are nothing compared with him. You may be diverted by them; but Johnson gives you a forcible hug, and shakes laughter out of you, whether you will or no."

Goldsmith, however, was often very fortunate in his witty contests, even when he entered the lists with Johnson himself. Sir Joshua Reynolds was in company with them one day, when Goldsmith said, that he thought he could write a good fable, mentioned the simplicity which that kind of composition requires, and observed, that in most fables the animals introduced seldom talk in character. "For instance," said he, "the fable of the little fishes, who saw birds fly over their heads, and envying them, petitioned Jupiter to be changed into birds. The skill," continued he, "consists in making them talk like little fishes." While he indulged himself in this fanciful reverie, he observed Johnson shaking his sides, and laughing: upon which he smartly proceeded—"Why, Dr. Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think; for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like *whales*."

The English Roscius having been mentioned, Johnson said of him, "Garrick's conversation is gay and grotesque; it is a dish of all sorts, but all good things: there is no solid meat in it; there is a want of sentiment in it: not but that he has sentiment sometimes, and sentiment too very powerful and very pleasing; but it has not its full proportion in his conversation."

He used frequently to observe, that men might

be very eminent in a profession, without our perceiving any particular power of mind in them in conversation. "It seems strange," said he, "that a man should see so far to the right, who sees so short a way to the left. Burke is the only man whose common conversation corresponds with the general fame which he has in the world: take up whatever topic you please, he is ready to meet you."

Of narratives in conversation, he said, "The value of every story depends on its being true. A story is a picture either of an individual, or of human nature in general; if it be false, it is a picture of nothing: for instance—suppose a man should tell that Johnson, before setting out for Italy, as he had to cross the Alps, sat down to make himself wings: this many people would believe; but it would be a picture of nothing. \* \* \* \* \*, (naming a worthy friend of ours), used to think a story, a story, till I showed him that truth was essential to it." BOSWELL. "Foote entertains us with stories which are not true; but, indeed, it is properly not as narratives that Foote's stories please us, but as collections of ludicrous images." JOHNSON. "Foote is quite impartial, for he tells lies of every body."

Discussing the question, whether drinking improved conversation and benevolence, sir Joshua Reynolds maintained it did. JOHNSON. "No, sir; before dinner, men meet with great inequality of understanding; and those who are conscious of their inferiority, have the modesty not to talk: when they have drunk wine, every man feels himself happy, and loses that modesty, and grows im-

pudent and vociferous ; but he is not improved ; he is only not sensible of his defects." SIR JOSHUA.

" You are talking of the effects of excess in wine ; but a moderate glass enlivens the mind, by giving a proper circulation to the blood. I am in very good spirits when I get up in the morning ; by dinner time I am exhausted ; wine puts me in the same state as when I got up : and I am sure that moderate drinking makes people talk better." JOHNSON.

" No, sir ; wine gives not light, gay, ideal, hilarity ; but tumultuous, noisy, clamorous merriment. I have heard none of those drunken—nay, drunken is a coarse word—none of those *vinous* flights." SIR JOSHUA.

" Because you have sat by, quite sober, and felt an envy of the happiness of those who were drinking." JOHNSON. " Perhaps contempt. And,

sir, it is not necessary to be drunk one's self, to relish the wit of drunkenness. Do we not judge of the drunken wit of the dialogue between Iago and Cassio (the most excellent in its kind), when we are quite sober ? Wit is wit, by whatever means it is produced ; and, if good, will appear so at all times.

I admit that the spirits are raised by drinking, as by the common participation of any pleasure : cock-fighting, or bear-baiting will raise the spirits of a company, as drinking does, though surely they will not improve conversation. I also admit, that there are some sluggish men who are improved by drinking, as there are fruits which are not good till they are rotten : there are such men, but they are medlars. I indeed allow that there have been a very few men of talents who were improved by drinking, but I maintain that I am right as to the effects of drinking in general : and let it be considered, that

there is no position, however false in its universality, which is not true of some particular man."

SIR WILLIAM FORBES. "May not a man warmed with wine be like a bottle of beer, which is made brisker by being set before the fire!" JOHNSON—(laughing.) "Nay, I cannot answer that: that is too much for me." BOSWELL. "Wine does some people harm, by inflaming, confusing, and irritating their minds; but the experience of mankind has declared in favour of moderate drinking." JOHNSON. "Sir, I do not say it is wrong to produce self-complacency by drinking; I only deny that it improves the mind. When I drank wine, I scorned to drink it when in company. I have drunk many a bottle by myself; in the first place, because I had need of it to raise my spirits; in the second place, because I would have nobody to witness its effects upon me."

Shiels, who in part compiled Cibber's *Lives of the Poets*, was one day sitting with Johnson: the doctor took down Thomson, and read aloud a large portion of him, and then asked, "Is not this fine?" Shiels having expressed the highest admiration, "Well, sir," said Johnson, "I have omitted every other line."

A very celebrated lady, *then* just come to London from an obscure situation in the country, met Dr. Johnson at sir Joshua Reynolds's one evening. She very soon began to pay her court to him in the most fulsome strain. "Spare me, I beseech you, dear madam," was his reply. She still *laid it on*. "Pray, madam, let us have no more of this," he rejoined. Not paying any attention to these warnings, she continued still her eulogy. At length, provoked by

this indelicate and *vain* obtrusion of compliment, he exclaimed, "Dearest lady, consider with yourself what your flattery is worth, before you bestow it so freely."

Boswell relating that he had travelled all the preceding night; gone to bed at Leek, in Staffordshire; and, when he rose to go to church in the afternoon, he was informed there had been an earthquake, of which, it seems, the shock had been felt in some degree at Ashbourne—Johnson, who was just arrived, said, "Sir, it will be much exaggerated in public talk: for, in the first place, the common people do not accurately adapt their thoughts to the objects; nor, secondly, do they accurately adapt their words to their thoughts: they do not mean to lie; but, taking no pains to be exact, they give you very false accounts. A great part of their language is proverbial: if any thing rocks at all, they say *it rocks like a cradle*; and in this way they go on."

Dr. Johnson being ill, Boswell breakfasted with him, and he seemed much relieved, having taken opium the night before. He however protested against it, as a remedy that should be given with the utmost reluctance, and only in extreme necessity. Boswell mentioned how commonly it was used in Turkey, and that therefore it could not be so pernicious as he apprehended. He grew warm, and said, "Turks take opium, and Christians take opium; but Russel, in his account of Aleppo, tells us, that it is as disgraceful in Turkey to take too much opium, as it is with us to get drunk. Sir, it is amazing how things are exaggerated. A gentleman was lately telling in a company where I was pre-

sent, that in France, as soon as a man of fashion marries, he takes an opera girl into keeping; and this he mentioned as a general custom. 'Pray, sir,' said I, 'how many opera girls may there be?' He answered, 'About fourscore.' 'Well then, sir,' said I, 'you see there can be no more than fourscore men of fashion who can do this.'"

Another proof of the importance of simple calculation in reducing things to their true level, occurred in the following conversation. JOHNSON. "Were I a country gentleman, I should not be very hospitable; I should not have crowds in my house." BOSWELL. "Sir Alexander Dick tells me, that he remembers having a thousand people in a year to dine at his house; that is, reckoning each person as one each time that he dined there." JOHNSON. "That, sir, is about three a-day." BOSWELL. "How your statement lessens the idea!" JOHNSON. "That, sir, is the good of counting: it brings every thing to a certainty, which before floated in the mind indefinitely." BOSWELL. "But *omne ignotum pro magnifico est*: one is sorry to have this diminished." JOHNSON. "Sir, you should not allow yourself to be delighted with error." BOSWELL. "Three a day seem but few." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, he who entertains three a day, does very liberally: and if there is a large family, the poor entertain those three, for they eat what the poor would get: there must be superfluous meat; it must be given to the poor, or thrown out."

The subject of quotation being introduced, Mr. Wilkes censured it as pedantry. JOHNSON. "No, sir, it is a good thing; there is a community of mind in it: classical quotation is the *parole* of lite-

rary men all over the world." WILKES. "Upon the continent they all quote the vulgate Bible: Shakspeare is chiefly quoted here; and we quote also Pope, Prior, Butler, Waller, and sometimes Cowley."

Having spent an evening at Mr. Langton's with the reverend Dr. Parr, he was much pleased with the conversation of that learned gentleman; and, after he was gone, said to Mr. Langton, "Sir, I am obliged to you for having asked me this evening. Parr is a fair man. I do not know when I have had an occasion of such free controversy. It is remarkable how much of a man's life may pass without meeting with any instance of this kind of open discussion."

Another time he said to Boswell, "If you come to settle here, we will have one day in the week on which we will meet by ourselves. That is the happiest conversation where there is no competition, no vanity, but a calm quiet interchange of sentiments."

Dr. Adams relating, that in some of the colleges at Oxford, the fellows had excluded the students from social intercourse with them in the common room. JOHNSON. "They are in the right, sir: there can be no real conversation, no fair exertion of mind amongst them, if the young men are by; for a man who has a character does not choose to stake it in their presence." BOSWELL. "But, sir, may there not be very good conversation without a contest for superiority?" JOHNSON. "No animated conversation, sir; for it cannot be but one or other will come off superior: I do not mean that the victor must have the better of the argument, for



he may take the weak side; but his superiority of parts and knowledge will necessarily appear; and he to whom he thus shows himself superior is less-ened in the eyes of the young men. You know it was said, '*Mallem cum Scaligero errare quam cum Clavio recte sapere.*' In the same manner take Bentley's and Jason de Nores' Comments upon Horace, you will admire Bentley more when wrong than Jason when right."

And once, when Johnson was ill, and unable to exert himself as much as usual without fatigue, Mr. Burke having been mentioned, he said, "That fellow calls forth all my powers. Were I to see Burke now it would kill me." So much was he accustomed to consider conversation as a contest; and such was his notion of Burke as an opponent.

The following incident is a proof of this:—One evening, previous to the trial of Barette, a consultation of his friends was held at the house of Mr. Cox, the solicitor, in Southampton buildings, Chancery lane: among others present were Mr. Burke and Dr. Johnson, who differed in sentiments concerning the tendency of some part of the defence the prisoner was to make. When the meeting was over, Mr. Steevens observed, that the question between him and his friend had been agitated with rather too much warmth. "It may be so, sir," replied the doctor, "for Burke and I should have been of one opinion, if we had had no audience."\*

That the doctor's leading object in conversation

\* How painful to reflect, that so great a man could be wayed by the desire of victory when the life of a friend was staked on the point in dispute!—*Ed.*

was victory, not truth, will farther appear in the following specimens of it.

Travelling in a stage coach, a gentleman talked violently against the Roman-catholics, and the horrors of the Inquisition. To the utter astonishment of all the passengers but Boswell, who knew that he could talk upon any side of a question, he defended the Inquisition, and maintained, that "false doctrine should be checked on its first appearance; that the civil power should unite with the church in punishing those who dare attack the established religion, and that such only were punished by the Inquisition."

Another passenger was a Dutchman, who spoke English tolerably well; and thinking to recommend himself to them by expatiating on the superiority of the criminal jurisprudence of this country over that of Holland, he inveighed against the barbarity of putting an accused person to the torture, in order to force a confession. But Johnson was as ready for this, as for the Inquisition. "Why, sir, you do not, I find, understand the law of your own country. To torture, in Holland, is considered as a favour to an accused person; for no man is put to the torture there, unless there is as much evidence against him as would amount to conviction in England. An accused person among you, therefore, has one chance more to escape punishment than those who are tried among us."

Talking of trade, Mr. Ferguson, the self-taught philosopher, told him of a new-invented machine which went without horses: a man who sat in it turned a handle, which worked a spring that drove it forward. "Then, sir," said Johnson, "what is

gained is, the man has his choice whether he will move himself alone, or himself and the machine too." Dominicetti being mentioned, he would not allow him any merit. "There is nothing in all this boasted system. No, sir: medicated baths can be no better than warm water; their only effect can be that of tepid moisture." One of the company took the other side, maintaining that medicines of various sorts, and some too of most powerful effect, are introduced into the human frame by the medium of the pores; and therefore, when warm water is impregnated with salutiferous substances, it may produce great effects as a bath. Johnson did not answer it; but talking for victory, and determined to be master of the field, he had recourse to the device which Goldsmith imputed to him in the witty words of one of Cibber's comedies: "There is no arguing with Johnson; for when his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end of it." He turned to the gentleman, "Well, sir, go to Dominicetti, and get thyself fumigated; but be sure that the steam be directed to thy *head*, for *that* is the *peccant part*." This produced a triumphant roar of laughter from the motley assembly of philosophers, printers, and dependents, male and female.

The following is characteristic of the furious disputant. When Boswell called upon Dr. Johnson one morning, he found him highly satisfied with his colloquial prowess the preceding evening. "Well," said he, "we had good talk." BOSWELL. "Yes, sir; you tossed and gored several persons."

Talking of a very respectable author, he told a curious circumstance in his life, which was, that he

had married a printer's devil. REYNOLDS. "A printer's devil, sir! Why, I thought a printer's devil was a creature with a black face and in rags."

JOHNSON. "Yes, sir; but I suppose he had her face washed, and put clean clothes on her. (Then looking very serious, and very earnest,) "And she did not disgrace him; the woman had a bottom of good sense." The word *bottom* thus introduced, was so ludicrous when contrasted with his gravity, that most of the company could not forbear tittering and laughing; though the bishop of Kilaloe kept his countenance with perfect steadiness, while Miss Hannah More slyly hid her face behind a lady's back who sat on the same settee with her. His pride could not bear that any expression of his should excite ridicule, when he did not intend it; he therefore resolved to assume and exercise despotic power, glanced sternly around, and called out, in a strong tone, "Where's the merriment?" Then collecting himself, and looking awful, to make his auditors feel how he could impose restraint; and as it were searching his mind for a still more ludicrous word, he slowly pronounced, "I say the woman was *fundamentally* sensible:" as if he had said, hear this now, and laugh if you dare. They all sat composed as at a funeral.

Yet he was capable of arguing justly, and of seeing things in their proper light. He observed of Blacklock's poetry, so far as it was descriptive of visible objects, that, "as its author had the misfortune to be blind, we may be absolutely sure, that such passages are combinations of what he has remembered of the works of other writers who could see. That foolish fellow Spence, has la-

boured to explain philosophically how Blacklock may have done; by means of his own faculties, what it is impossible he should do. The solution, as I have given it, is plain. Suppose, I know a man to be so lame that he is absolutely incapable to move himself, and I find him in a different room from that in which I left him; shall I puzzle myself with idle conjectures, that, perhaps, his nerves have, by some unknown change, all at once become effective? No, sir, it is clear how he got into a different room: he was *carried*."

When Boswell was going to Utrecht, Johnson accompanied him to Harwich; where the former happened to say, it would be terrible, if he should not find a speedy opportunity of returning to London, and be confined in so dull a place. JOHNSON. "Don't, sir, accustom yourself to use big words for little matters. It would not be *terrible* though I *were* to be detained some time here."

What passed at the doctor's interview with the king, will be found in its proper place in Part II of this work, under the head LITERATURE. At sir Joshua Reynolds's, where a circle of Johnson's friends was collected round him to hear his account of this memorable conversation, Dr. Joseph Warton, in his frank and lively manner, was very active in pressing him to mention the particulars. "Come now, sir, this is an interesting matter; do favour us with it." Johnson, with great good humour, complied.

He told them, "I found his majesty wished I should talk, and I made it my business to talk. I find it does a man good to be talked to by his sovereign. In the first place, a man cannot be in a pas-

sion." Here some question interrupted him, which is to be regretted, as he certainly would have pointed out and illustrated many circumstances of advantage, from being in a situation, where the powers of the mind are at once excited to vigorous exertion, and tempered by reverential awe.

During all the time in which Dr. Johnson was employed in relating to the circle at sir Joshua Reynolds's the particulars of what passed between the king and him, Dr. Goldsmith remained unmoved upon a sofa at some distance, affecting not to join in the least in the eager curiosity of the company. He assigned as a reason for his gloom and seeming inattention, that he apprehended Johnson had relinquished his purpose of furnishing him with a prologue to his play, with the hopes of which he had been flattered; but it was strongly suspected that he was fretting with chagrin and envy at the singular honour Dr. Johnson had lately enjoyed. At length, the frankness and simplicity of his natural character prevailed. He sprung from the sofa, advanced to Johnson, and in a kind of flutter, from imagining himself in the situation which he had just been hearing described, exclaimed, "Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done; for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it."

## No. XVI.

## CHARACTERS.

BOSWELL was first introduced to the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson at the house of T. Davies, formerly an actor, but then a bookseller, in Russel-street, Covent-garden. In the course of the conversation, Johnson said, addressing himself to Davies, "What do you think of Garrick? He has refused me an order for the play for Miss Williams, because he knows the house will be full, and that an order would be worth three shillings." Eager to take any opening to get into conversation with him, he ventured to say, "O, sir, I cannot think Mr. Garrick would grudge such a trifle to you." "Sir," said he, with a stern look, "I have known David Garrick longer than you have done: and I know no right you have to talk to me on the subject." Boswell subjoins in a note: "That this was a momentary sally against Garrick there can be no doubt: for, at Johnson's desire, he had, some years before, given a benefit-night at his theatre to this very person, by which she had got two hundred pounds. Johnson, indeed, upon all other occasions, when I was in his company, praised the very liberal charity of Garrick. I once mentioned to him, 'It is observed, sir, that you attack Garrick yourself, but will suffer nobody else to do it.' JOHNSON, smiling. 'Why, sir, that is true.'"

Another time, talking of Garrick, he said: "He

is the first man in the world for sprightly conversation."

Of the master of the ceremonies at Bath he once said: "Derrick may do very well as long as he can outrun his character; but the moment his character gets up with him, it is all over."

It is, however, but just to record, that some years afterwards, when Boswell reminded him of this sarcasm, he said, "Well, but Derrick has now got a character that he need not run away from."

Of Goldsmith he observed: "Dr. Goldsmith is one of the first men we now have as an author, and he is a very worthy man too. He has been loose in his principles, but he is coming right."

Again: "Sir, he is so much afraid of being unnoticed, that he often talks merely lest you should forget that he is in the company." BOSWELL. "Yes, he stands forward." JOHNSON. "True, sir; but if a man is to stand forward, he should wish to do it not in an awkward posture, not in rags, not so as that he shall only be exposed to ridicule." BOSWELL. "For my part I like very well to hear honest Goldsmith talk away carelessly." JOHNSON. "Why, yes, sir; but he should not like to hear himself."

And another time: "Goldsmith referred every thing to vanity; his virtues and his vices too were from that motive. He was not a social man. He never exchanged mind with you."

Dr. John Campbell, the celebrated political and biographical writer, being mentioned, Johnson said, "Campbell is a man of much knowledge, and has a good share of imagination. His *Hermippus Redivivus* is very entertaining, as an account of



the Hermetic philosophy, and as furnishing a curious history of the extravagances of the human mind. If it were merely imaginary, it would be nothing at all. Campbell is not always rigidly careful of truth in his conversation; but I do not believe there is any thing of this carelessness in his books. Campbell is a good man, a pious man. I am afraid he has not been in the inside of a church for many years; but he never passes a church without pulling off his hat. This shows that he has good principles. I used to go pretty often to Campbell's on a Sunday evening, till I began to consider, that the shoals of Scotchmen who flocked about him might probably say, when any thing of mine was well done, 'Ay, ay, he has learnt this of Cawmell? \*' "

Boswell expressed a desire to be acquainted with a lady who had been much talked of, and universally celebrated for extraordinary address and insinuation. JOHNSON. "Never believe extraordinary characters which you hear of people: depend upon it, sir, they are exaggerated. You do not see one man shoot a great deal higher than another." Boswell mentioned Mr. Burke. JOHNSON. "Yes; Burke is an extraordinary man. His stream of mind is perpetual." Johnson's high estimation of the talents of this gentleman was uniform from their early acquaintance. Sir Joshua Reynolds said, that when Mr. Burke was first elected a member of parliament, and sir John Hawkins expressed a wonder at his attaining a seat, Johnson replied, "Now we,

\* Warton tells, that Johnson said of him: "He is the richest author that ever grazed the common of literature."

who know Mr. Burke, know, that he will be one of the first men in the country."

Of Dr. Taylor of Ashbourne, Johnson said, "Taylor is a very sensible acute man, and has a strong mind: he has great activity in some respects; and yet such a sort of indolence, that, if you should put a pebble upon his chimney-piece, you would find it there, in the same state, a year afterwards."

Talking of an acquaintance, distinguished for knowing an uncommon variety of miscellaneous articles both in antiquities and polite literature, he observed, "You know, sir, he runs about with little weight upon his mind." And talking of another very ingenious gentleman, who, from the warmth of his temper, was at variance with many of his acquaintance, and wished to avoid him, he said, "Sir, he leads the life of an outlaw."

Dr. Robertson expatiated on the character of a certain nobleman; that he was one of the strongest-minded men that ever lived; that he would sit in company quite sluggish, while there was nothing to call forth his intellectual vigour; but the moment that any important subject was started, for instance, how this country is to be defended against a French invasion, he would rouse himself, and show his extraordinary talents with the most powerful ability and animation. JOHNSON. "Yet this man cut his own throat. The true strong and sound mind is the mind that can embrace equally great things and small. Now I am told the king of Prussia will say to a servant, 'Bring me a bottle of such a wine, which came in such a year; it lies in such a corner of the cellars.' I would have a man great in great things, and elegant in little things." He

said to Boswell afterwards, when they were by themselves, "Robertson was in a mighty romantic humour; he talked of one whom he did not know; but I *downed* him with the king of Prussia." Boswell. "Yes, sir, you threw a *bottle* at his head."

An ingenious gentleman was mentioned, concerning whom both Robertson and Ramsay agreed that he had a constant firmness of mind; for after a laborious day, and amidst a multiplicity of cares and anxieties, he would sit down with his sisters, and be quite cheerful and good-humoured. Such a disposition, it was observed, was a happy gift of nature. JOHNSON. "I do not think so; a man has from nature a certain portion of mind; the use he makes of it depends upon his own free will. That a man has always the same firmness of mind, I do not say; because every man feels his mind less firm at one time than another; but I think a man's being in a good or bad humour depends upon his will." "I, however," Boswell adds, "could not help thinking, that a man's humour is often uncontrollable by his will."

He thus characterised the duke of Devonshire, grandfather of the present representative of that very respectable family: "He was not a man of superior abilities, but he was a man strictly faithful to his word. If, for instance, he had promised you an acorn, and none had grown that year in his woods, he would not have contented himself with that excuse: he would have sent to Denmark for it: so unconditional was he in keeping his word; so high as to the point of honour." This was a liberal testimony from the Tory Johnson to the virtue of a great Whig nobleman.

Johnson gave, in his happy discriminative manner, a portrait of the late Mr. Fitzherbert of Derbyshire. "There was no sparkle, no brilliancy in Fitzherbert; but I never knew a man who was so generally acceptable. He made every body quite easy, overpowered nobody by the superiority of his talents, made no man think worse of himself by being his rival, seemed always to listen, did not oblige you to hear much from him, and did not oppose what you said. Every body liked him; but he had no friend, as I understand the word, nobody with whom he exchanged intimate thoughts. People were willing to think well of every thing about him. A gentleman was making an affected rant, as many people do, of great feelings about 'his dear son,' who was at school near London; how anxious he was lest he might be ill, and what he would give to see him. 'Can't you,' said Fitzherbert, 'take a post-chaise, and go to him?' This, to be sure, *finished* the affected man; but there was not much in it.\* However, this was circulated as wit for a whole winter, and I believe a part of a summer too; a proof that he was no

\* Dr. Gisborne, physician to his majesty's household, has given a fuller account of this story than had reached Dr. Johnson. The affected gentleman was the late John Gilbert Cooper, esq. author of a *Life of Socrates*, and of some poems in Dodsley's collection. Mr. Fitzherbert found him one morning apparently in such violent agitation, on account of the indisposition of his son, as to seem beyond the power of comfort. At length, however, he exclaimed, "I'll write an elegy." Mr. Fitzherbert being satisfied, by this, of the sincerity of his emotions, slyly said, "Had not you better take a post-chaise, and go and see him?" It was the shrewdness of the insinuation, which made the story be circulated.

very witty man. He was an instance of the truth of the observation, that a man will please more upon the whole by negative qualities than by positive; by never offending, than by giving a great deal of delight. In the first place, men hate more steadily than they love: and if I have said something to hurt a man once, I shall not get the better of this, by saying many things to please him."

Speaking of a certain literary friend, he said—"He is a very pompous puzzling fellow: he lent me a letter once that somebody had written to him, no matter what it was about; but he wanted to have the letter back, and expressed a mighty value for it; he hoped it was to be met with again; he would not lose it for a thousand pounds. I laid my hand upon it soon afterwards, and gave it him. I believe, I said I was very glad to have met with it. O, then he did not know that it signified any thing. So you see, when the letter was lost it was worth a thousand pounds, and when it was found it was not worth a farthing."

A writer of deserved eminence being mentioned, Johnson said, "Why, sir, he is a man of good parts, but being originally poor, he has got a love of mean company and low jocularities; a very bad thing, sir. To laugh is good, and to talk is good; but you ought no more to think it enough if you laugh, than you are to think it enough if you talk. You may laugh in as many ways as you talk; and surely every way of talking that is practised cannot be esteemed."

"Has not \* \* \* \* \* a great deal of wit, sir?"  
JOHNSON. "I do not think so, sir. He is, indeed, continually attempting wit, but he fails: and I have no more pleasure in hearing a man attempting wit

and falling, than in seeing a man trying to leap over a ditch, and tumbling into it."

He described the father of one of his friends thus: "Sir, he was so exuberant a talker at public meetings, that the gentlemen of his county were afraid of him. No business could be done for his declamation."

Talking of a penurious gentleman of his acquaintance, Johnson said, "Sir, he is narrow, not so much from avarice, as from impotence to spend his money. He cannot find in his heart to pour out a bottle of wine; but he would not much care if it should sour."

In the evening the rev. Mr. Seward, of Lichfield, who was passing through Ashbourne in his way home, drank tea there at Dr. Taylor's. Johnson described him thus: "Sir, his ambition is to be a fine talker; so he goes to Buxton, and such places, where he may find companies to listen to him. And, sir, he is a valetudinarian; one of those who are always mending themselves. I do not know a more disagreeable character than a valetudinarian, who thinks he may do any thing that is for his ease, and indulges himself in the grossest freedoms: sir, he brings himself to the state of a hog in a sty."

Talking of some of the modern plays, he said *False Delicacy* was totally void of character. He praised Goldsmith's *Good-natured Man*; said it was the best comedy that had appeared since *The Provoked Husband*, and that there had not been of late any such character exhibited on the stage as that of Croaker. Boswell observed it was the *Suspirans* of his Rambler. He said, Goldsmith had owned he had borrowed it thence. "Sir," continued he,

“there is all the difference in the world between characters of nature and characters of manners; and *there* is the difference between the characters of Fielding and those of Richardson. Characters of manners are very entertaining; but they are to be understood by a more superficial observer than characters of nature, where a man must dive into the recesses of the human heart.”

He always appeared to estimate the compositions of Richardson too highly, and to have an unreasonable prejudice against Fielding. In comparing these two writers, he used this expression: “There is as great a difference between them, as between a man who knows how a watch is made, and a man who can tell the hour by looking on the dial-plate.” This was a short and figurative statement of his distinction between drawing characters of nature and characters only of manners. “But I cannot help being of opinion,” remarks Boswell, “that the neat watches of Fielding are as well constructed as the large clocks of Richardson, and that his dial-plates are brighter. Fielding’s characters, though they do not expand themselves so widely in dissertation, are as just pictures of human nature, and I will venture to say, have more striking features, and nicer touches of the pencil; and though Johnson used to quote with approbation a saying of Richardson’s, ‘that the virtues of Fielding’s heroes were the vices of a truly good man,’ I will venture to add, that the moral tendency of Fielding’s writings, though it does not encourage a strained and rarely possible virtue, is ever favourable to honour and honesty, and cherishes the benevolent and generous affections. He who is as good as Fielding

would make him, is an amiable member of society, and may be led on by more regulated instructors, to a higher state of ethical perfection." Johnson proceeded: "Even sir Francis Wroughead is a character of manners, though drawn with great humour." He then repeated, very happily, all sir Francis's credulous account to Manly of his being with "the great man" and securing a place. Boswell asked him, if the *Suspicious Husband* did not furnish a well-drawn character, that of Ranger? JOHNSON. "No, sir; Ranger is just a rake, a mere rake, and a lively young fellow, but no *character*."

"As a curious instance," says Boswell, "how little a man knows, or wishes to know, his own character in the world; or, rather as a convincing proof, that Johnson's roughness was only external, and did not proceed from his heart, I insert the following dialogue:—JOHNSON. 'It is wonderful, sir, how rare a quality good humour is in life: we meet with very few good-humoured men.' I mentioned four of our friends, none of whom he would allow to be good-humoured: one was *acid*, another was *muddy*, and to the others he had objections which have escaped me. Then shaking his head, and stretching himself at ease in the coach, and smiling with much complacency, he turned to me, and said, 'I look upon *myself* as a good-humoured fellow.' The epithet *fellow*, applied to the great lexicographer, the stately moralist, the masterly critic, as if he had been *Sam* Johnson, a mere pleasant companion, was highly diverting; and this light notion of himself struck me with wonder. I answered (also smiling), 'No, no, sir; that will *not*



do : you are good-natured, but not good-humoured ; you are irascible : you have not patience with folly and absurdity. I believe you would pardon them, if there were time to deprecate your vengeance ; but punishment follows so quick after sentence, that they cannot escape.' ”

## No. XVII.

## TRAVEL.

BOSWELL being about to travel, says of Johnson, “ He advised me, when abroad, to be as much as I could with the professors in the universities, and with the clergy ; for, from their conversation I might expect the best accounts of every thing, in whatever country I should be, with the additional advantage of keeping my learning alive.

“ It will be observed, that when giving me advice as to my travels, Dr. Johnson did not dwell upon cities, and palaces, and pictures, and shows, and Arcadian scenes. He was of Lord Essex’s opinion, who advises his kinsman Roger, earl of Rutland, ‘ rather to go a hundred miles to speak with one wise man, than five miles to see a fair town.’ ”

At a period long subsequent to this, he tells us, “ He talked with an uncommon animation of travelling into distant countries ; that the mind was enlarged by it, and that an acquisition of dignity of character was derived from it. He expressed a particular enthusiasm with respect to visiting the wall of China. I caught it for the moment, and said, I really believed I should go and see the wall of China,

had I not children, of whom it was my duty to take care. 'Sir,' said he, 'by doing so, you would do what would be of importance in raising your children to eminence. There would be a lustre reflected upon them from your spirit and curiosity. They would be at all times regarded as the children of a man who had gone to view the wall of China. I am serious, sir.' "

Speaking of Bruce, Boswell says, "Johnson told me, that he had been in the company of a gentleman whose extraordinary travels had been much the subject of conversation: but I found he had not listened to him with that full confidence, without which there is little satisfaction in the society of travellers. I was curious to hear what opinion so able a judge as Johnson had formed of his abilities, and I asked, if he was not a man of sense. JOHNSON. 'Why, sir, he is not a distinct relater; and I should say, he is neither abounding nor deficient in sense. I did not perceive any superiority of understanding.' BOSWELL. 'But will you not allow him a nobleness of resolution, in penetrating into distant regions?' JOHNSON. 'That, sir, is not to the present purpose; we are talking of sense. A fighting-cock has a nobleness of resolution.' "

The following conversation occurred at a tavern, dining with a numerous company. JOHNSON. "I have been reading Twiss's Travels in Spain, which are just come out. They are as good as the first book of travels that you will take up. They are as good as those of Keysler or Blainville; nay, as Addison's, if you except the learning. They are not so good as Brydone's, but they are better than Pockocke's. I have not, indeed, cut the leaves yet; but

I have read in them where the pages are open, and I do not suppose that what is in the pages which are closed is worse than what is in the open pages. It would seem," he added, "that Addison had not acquired much Italian learning, for we do not find it introduced into his writings. The only instance that I recollect, is his quoting '*Stavo bene; per star meglio, sto qui.*'"

Boswell mentioned Addison's having borrowed many of his classical remarks from Leandro Alberti. Mr. Beauclerk said, "It was alleged, that he had borrowed also from another Italian author." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, all who go to look for what the classics have said of Italy, must find the same passages; and I should think it would be one of the first things the Italians would do, on the revival of learning, to collect all that the Roman authors have said of their country."

Mr. Thrale had long planned a journey to Italy with his family, in which Dr. Johnson was to accompany them; and even after the death of Mr. Thrale's son, a journey to Italy was still in the doctor's thoughts. He said, "A man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority; from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see. The grand object of travelling is, to see the shores of the Mediterranean. On those shores were the four great empires of the world—the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman: All our religion, almost all our law, almost all our arts, almost all that sets us above savages, has come from the shores of the Mediterranean." General Paoli observed, "The Mediterranean would be a noble subject for a poem."

Boswell mentioned a scheme which he had of making a tour to the Isle of Man, and giving a full account of it; and that Mr. Burke had playfully suggested as a motto,

“ The proper study of mankind is MAN.”

JOHNSON. “ Sir, you will get more by the book than the jaunt will cost you; so you will have your diversion for nothing, and add to your reputation.”

Dr. Johnson observed, “ That every body commended his Journey to the Western Islands, as it were, in their own way. For instance,” said he, “ Mr. Jackson (the all-knowing), told me there was more good sense upon trade in it, than he should hear in the house of commons in a year, except from Burke. Jones commended the part which treats of language; Burke that which describes the inhabitants of mountainous countries.”

JOHNSON. “ I have been reading Thicknesse’s Travels, which, I think, are entertaining.” Bos-

WELL. “ What, sir, a good book?” JOHNSON.

“ Yes, sir, to read once; I do not say you are to make a study of it, and digest it: and I believe it to be a true book in his intention. All travellers generally mean to tell truth; though Thicknesse observes, upon Smollet’s account of his alarming a whole town in France by firing a blunderbuss, and frightening a French nobleman till he made him tie on his port-manteau—that he would be loath to say Smollet had told two lies in one page; but he had found the only town in France where these things could have happened. Travellers must be often mistaken: in every thing, except where mensuration can be ap-

plied, they may honestly differ. There has been, of late, a strange turn in travellers to be displeased."

Boswell expressed some inclination to publish an account of his *Travels* upon the continent of Europe, for which he had a variety of materials collected. JOHNSON. "I do not say, sir, you may not publish your travels; but I give you my opinion, that you would lessen yourself by it. What can you tell of countries so well known as those upon the continent of Europe, which you have visited?" BOSWELL. "But I can give an entertaining narrative, with many incidents, anecdotes, *jeux d'esprit*, and remarks, so as to make very pleasant reading." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, most modern travellers in Europe, who have published their travels, have been laughed at: I would not have you added to the number. The world is now not contented to be merely entertained by a traveller's narrative; they want to learn something. Now some of my friends asked me why I did not give some account of my travels in France. The reason is plain; intelligent readers had seen more of France than I had. You might have liked my travels in France, and *The Club* might have liked them; but, upon the whole, there would have been more ridicule than good produced by them." BOSWELL. "I cannot agree with you, sir. People would like to read what you say of any thing. Suppose a face has been painted by fifty painters before, still we love to see it done by Sir Joshua." JOHNSON. "True, sir; but Sir Joshua cannot paint a face, when he has not time to look on it." BOSWELL. "Sir, a sketch of any sort by him is valuable. And, sir, to talk to you in your own style,

(raising my voice, and shaking my head) you *should* have given us your travels in France. I am *sure* I am right, *and there's an end on't.*"

Boswell said to him, that it was certainly true, as his friend Dempster had observed in his letter to him upon the subject, that a great part of what was in his Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, had been in his mind before he left London. JOHNSON. "Why yes, sir, the topics were; and books of travels will be good in proportion to what a man has previously in his mind, his knowing what to observe, his power of contrasting one mode of life with another. As the Spanish proverb says, 'He, who would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry the wealth of the Indies with him.' So it is in travelling; a man must carry knowledge with him, if he would bring home knowledge." BOSWELL. "The proverb, I suppose, sir, means, he must carry a large stock with him to trade with." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir."

A gentleman having come in who was to go as a mate in the ship along with Mr. Banks and Dr. Solander, Dr. Johnson asked what were the names of the ships destined for the expedition. The gentleman answered, they were once to be called the Drake and the Raleigh, but now they were to be called the Resolution and the Adventure. JOHNSON. "Much better; for had the Raleigh returned without going round the world, it would have been ridiculous. To give them the names of the Drake and the Raleigh, was laying a trap for satire." BOSWELL. "Had not you some desire to go upon this expedition, sir?" JOHNSON. "Why yes, but I soon laid it aside. Sir, there is very little of intellectual

in the course : besides, I see but at a small distance : so it was not worth my while to go to see birds fly, which I should not have seen fly ; and fishes swim, which I should not have seen swim."

## No. XVIII.

### LAW.

BOSWELL mentioned that a gay friend had advised him against being a lawyer, because he would be excelled by plodding blockheads. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, in the formulary and statutory part of law, a plodding blockhead may excel ; but, in the ingenious and rational part of it, a plodding blockhead can never excel."

Sir Alexander Macdonald observed to him, "I think, sir, almost all great lawyers, such at least as have written upon law, have known only law, and nothing else." JOHNSON. "Why, no, sir ; Judge Hale was a great lawyer, and wrote upon law, and yet he knew a great many other things, and has written upon other things. Selden too." SIR A. "Very true, sir, and Lord Bacon. But was not Lord Coke a mere lawyer?" JOHNSON. "Why, I am afraid he was ; but he would have taken it very ill if you had told him so ; he would have prosecuted you for scandal." BOSWELL. "Lord Mansfield is not a mere lawyer." JOHNSON. "No, sir, I never was in Lord Mansfield's company ; but Lord Mansfield was distinguished at the university. Lord Mansfield, when he first came to town, drank Champagne with the wits, as Prior says. He was

the friend of Pope." SIR A. "Barristers, I believe, are not so abusive now as they were formerly. I fancy they had less law long ago, and so were obliged to take to abuse, to fill up the time. Now they have such a number of precedents, they have no occasion for abuse." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, they had more law long ago than they have now. As to precedents, to be sure they will increase in course of time; but the more precedents there are, the less occasion is there for law; that is to say, the less occasion is there for investigating principles."

Boswell asked him, whether, as a moralist, he did not think, that the practice of the law, in some degree, hurt the fine feeling of honesty. JOHNSON. "Why no, sir, if you act properly. You are not to deceive your clients with false representations of your opinion: you are not to tell lies to a judge." BOSWELL. "But what do you think of supporting a cause which you know to be bad?" JOHNSON. "Sir, you do not know it to be good or bad, till the judge determines it. I have said, that you are to state facts fairly; so that your thinking, or what you call knowing, a cause to be bad, must be from reasoning, must be from your supposing your arguments to be weak and inconclusive. But, sir, that is not enough. An argument, which does not convince yourself, may convince the judge to whom you urge it: and if it does convince him, why, then, sir, you are wrong, and he is right. It is his business to judge; and you are not to be confident in your own opinion, that a cause is bad, but to say all you can for your client, and then hear the judge's opinion." BOSWELL. "But, sir, does not affecting a warmth when you have no warmth, and appear-



ing to be clearly of one opinion, when you are in reality of another—does not such dissimulation impair one's honesty? Is there not some danger, that a lawyer may put on the same mask in common life, in the intercourse with his friends?" JOHNSON. "Why, no, sir; every body knows you are paid for affecting warmth for your client; and it is therefore properly no dissimulation. The moment you come from the bar, you resume your usual behaviour. Sir, a man will no more carry the artifice of the bar into the common intercourse of society, than a man who is paid for tumbling upon his hands will continue to tumble when he should walk on his feet."

Speaking of the *inward light*, to which some methodists pretended, he said, it was a principle utterly incompatible with social or civil security. "If a man," said he, "pretends to a principle of which I can know nothing, nay, not so much as that he has it, but only that he pretends to it; how can I tell what that person may be prompted to do? When a person professes to be governed by a written ascertained law, I can then know where to find him."

Talking of law cases, he said, "The English reports, in general, are very poor: only the half of what has been said is taken down, and of that half much is mistaken; whereas, in Scotland, the arguments on each side are deliberately put in writing, to be considered by the court. I think, a collection of your cases upon subjects of importance, with the opinions of the judges upon them; would be valuable."

Of Mr. Andrew Stuart's Letters to Lord Mansfield, on the celebrated Douglas cause, Boswell said to him, "May it not be doubted, sir, whether it be proper

to publish letters, arraigning the ultimate decision of an important cause by the supreme judicature of the nation." JOHNSON. "No, sir, I do not think it was wrong to publish these letters. If they are thought to do harm, why not answer them? But they will do no harm: if Mr. Douglas be indeed the son of Lady Jane, he cannot be hurt; if he be not her son, and yet has the great estate of the family of Douglas, he may well submit to have a pamphlet against him by Andrew Stuart. Sir, I think such a publication does good, as it does good to show us the possibilities of human life. And, sir, you will not say, that the Douglas cause was a cause of easy decision, when it divided your court as much as it could do, to be determined at all. When your judges are seven and seven, the casting vote of the president must be given on one side or other; no matter for my argument on which: one or the other *must* be taken; as when I am to move, there is no matter which leg I move first. And then, sir, it was otherwise determined here. No, sir, a more dubious determination of any question cannot be imagined."

Another time they talked of a book, in which an eminent judge was arraigned before the bar of the public, as having pronounced an unjust decision in a great cause. Dr. Johnson maintained, that this publication would not give any uneasiness to the judge. "For," said he, "either he acted honestly, or he meant to do injustice. If he acted honestly, his own consciousness will protect him; if he meant to do injustice, he will be glad to see the man who attacks him, so much vexed."

Boswell and Johnson got into an argument, whether the judges who went to India might with pro-

priety engage in trade. Johnson warmly maintained that they might: "For why," he urged, "should not judges get riches, as well as those who deserve them less?" BOSWELL. "They should have sufficient salaries, and have nothing to take off their attention from the affairs of the public." JOHNSON. "No judge, sir, can give his whole attention to his office; and it is very proper he should employ what time he has to himself, to his own advantage, in the most profitable manner." Davies enlivened the dispute, by making it somewhat dramatic. "Then, sir, he may become an usurer; and when he is going to the bench, he may be stopped—'Your lordship cannot go yet: here is a bunch of invoices; several ships are about to sail.'" JOHNSON. "Sir, you may as well say a judge should not have a house; for they may come and tell him—'your lordship's house is on fire;' and so, instead of minding the business of his court, he is to be occupied in getting the engine with the greatest speed. There is no end of this. Every judge, who has land, trades to a certain extent in corn, or in cattle, and in the land itself: undoubtedly, his steward acts for him, and so do clerks for a great merchant. A judge may be a farmer; but he is not to geld his own pigs. A judge may play at cards for his amusement; but he is not to play at marbles, or chuck farthings, in the piazza. No, sir, there is no profession to which a man gives a very great proportion of his time. It is wonderful, when a calculation is made, how little the mind is actually employed in the discharge of any profession. No man would be a judge, upon the condition of being totally a judge. The best employed lawyer has his mind at work but for a small proportion of his time: a great deal of

his occupation is merely mechanical. I once wrote for a magazine: I made a calculation, that if I should write but a page a day at the same rate, I should, in ten years, write nine volumes in folio, of an ordinary size and print." BOSWELL. "Such as Carte's History?" JOHNSON. "Yes, sir: when a man writes from his own mind, he writes very rapidly: the greatest part of a writer's time is spent in reading, in order to write; a man will turn over half a library to make one book."

Boswell argued warmly against the judges' trading, and mentioned Hale as an instance of a perfect judge, who devoted himself entirely to his office. JOHNSON. "Hale, sir, attended to other things besides law: he left a great estate." BOSWELL. "That was, because what he got accumulated without any exertion or anxiety on his part."

After talking of the great consequence which a man acquired by being employed in his profession, Boswell suggested a doubt of the justice of the general opinion, that it is improper in a lawyer to solicit employment; "for why," he urged, "should it not be equally allowable to solicit that as the means of consequence, as it is to solicit votes to be elected a member of parliament?" Mr. Strahan had told him that a countryman of his, who had risen to eminence in the law, had, when first making his way, solicited him to get him employed in city causes. JOHNSON. "Sir, it is wrong to stir up law-suits; but when once it is certain that a law-suit is to go on, there is nothing wrong in a lawyer's endeavouring that he shall have the benefit, rather than another." BOSWELL. "You would not solicit employment, sir, if you were a lawyer." JOHNSON. "No, sir; but not because I should think it wrong,

but because I should disdain it." This was a good distinction, which will be felt by men of just pride. He proceeded : " However, I would not have a lawyer be wanting to himself in using fair means. I would have him inject a little hint now and then, to prevent his being overlooked."

Dr. Johnson made a remark, which both Mr. Macbean and Boswell thought new. It was this : that " the law against usury is for the protection of creditors as well as debtors ; for if there were no such check, people would be apt, from the temptation of great interest, to lend to desperate persons, by whom they would lose their money. Accordingly, there are instances of ladies being ruined, by having injudiciously sunk their fortunes for high annuities, which, after a few years, ceased to be paid, in consequence of the ruined circumstances of the borrower."

Talking of a court-martial, that was sitting upon a very momentous public occasion, he expressed much doubt of an enlightened decision ; and said, that perhaps there was not a member of it, who, in the whole course of his life, had ever spent an hour by himself in balancing probabilities.

At a conversation at dinner one day at Mr. Hoole's, Mr. Nichol, the king's bookseller, and Boswell, attempted to controvert the maxim, " better that ten guilty should escape than one innocent person suffer ;" and were answered by Dr. Johnson with great power of reasoning and eloquence. He ably showed, that unless civil institutions ensure protection to the innocent, all the confidence which mankind should have in them would be lost.

## No. XIX.

## PHYSIC.

WHEN Mr. Beauclerk was ill, Johnson informed Boswell that, though he was in great pain, it was hoped he was not in danger; and that he now wished to consult Dr. Heberden, to try the effect of a "*new understanding*."

A physician being mentioned who had lost his practice, because his whimsically changing his religion had made people distrustful of him, Boswell maintained that this was unreasonable, as religion is unconnected with medical skill. JOHNSON. "Sir, it is not unreasonable; for when people see a man absurd in what they understand, they may conclude the same of him in what they do not understand. If a physician were to take to eating of horse-flesh, nobody would employ him; though one may eat horse-flesh, and be a very skilful physician. If a man were educated in an absurd religion, his continuing to profess it would not hurt him, though his changing to it would."

Dr. Taylor commended a physician who was known to him and Dr. Johnson, and said, "I fight many battles for him, as many people in the country dislike him." JOHNSON. "But you should consider, sir, that by every one of your victories he is a loser; for every man of whom you get the better, will be very angry, and resolve not to employ him; whereas, if people get the better of you in argument about him, they'll think, 'We'll send for Dr. \*\*\*\*\* never-

theless.' " This was an observation deep and sure in human nature.

Johnson mentioned Dr. Barry's System of Physic. " He was a man," said he, " who had acquired a high reputation in Dublin, came over to England, and brought his reputation with him, but had not great success. His notion was, that pulsation occasions death by attrition; and that, therefore, the way to preserve life is to retard pulsation. But we know, that pulsation is strongest in infants, and that we increase in growth while it operates in its regular course; so it cannot be the cause of destruction." Soon after this, he said something very flattering to Mrs. Thrale, which concluded with wishing her long life. " Sir," said Boswell, " if Dr. Barry's System be true, you have now shortened Mrs. Thrale's life, perhaps, some minutes, by accelerating her pulsation."

## No. XX.

### FINE ARTS.

WE fell into a disquisition, whether there is any beauty independent of utility. General Paoli maintained there was not; Dr. Johnson, that there was; and he instanced a coffee-cup, which he held in his hand, the painting of which was of no real use, as the cup would hold the coffee equally well if plain; yet the painting was beautiful.

The following conversation passed between several eminent men who had been dining together.

F. " I have been looking at this famous antique

marble dog of Mr. Jennings, valued at a thousand guineas, said to be Alcibiades's dog."

JOHNSON. "His tail then must be docked. That was the mark of Alcibiades's dog."

E. "A thousand guineas! The representation of no animal whatever is worth so much. At this rate a dog would be better than a living lion."

JOHNSON. "Sir, it is not the worth of the thing, but of the skill in forming it, which is so highly estimated. Every thing that enlarges the sphere of human powers, that shows man he can do what he thought he could not do, is valuable. The first man who balanced a straw upon his nose; Johnson, who rode upon three horses at a time; in short, all such men, deserved the applause of mankind, not on account of the use of what they did, but of the dexterity they exhibited."

BOSWELL. "Yet, a misapplication of time and assiduity is not to be encouraged. Addison, in one of his Spectators, commends the judgment of a king, who, as a suitable reward to a man that by long perseverance had attained to the art of throwing a barley-corn through the eye of a needle, gave him a bushel of barley."

JOHNSON. "He must have been a king of Scotland, where barley is scarce."

F. "One of the most antique figures of an animal is the boar at Florence."

JOHNSON. "The first boar that is well made in marble should be preserved as a wonder. When men arrive at a facility of making boars well, then the workmanship is not of such value; but they should however be preserved as examples, and as a greater



security for the restoration of the art, should it be lost."

Being in company with Gwyn the architect, Johnson expressed his disapprobation of ornamental architecture, such as magnificent columns supporting a portico, or expensive pilasters supporting merely their own capitals, "because it consumes labour disproportionate to its utility." For the same reason he satirised statuary. "Painting," said he, "consumes labour not disproportionate to its effect; but a fellow will hack half a year at a block of marble to make something in stone that hardly resembles a man. The value of statuary is owing to its difficulty. You would not value the finest head cut upon a carrot." The spirit of the artist rose against what he thought a Gothic attack, and he made a brisk defence. "What, sir, you will allow no value to beauty in architecture or in statuary? Why should we allow it then in writing? Why do you take the trouble to give us so many fine allusions, and bright images, and elegant phrases? You might convey all your instruction without these ornaments." Johnson smiled with complacency, but said, "Why, sir, all these ornaments are useful, because they obtain an easier reception for truth; but a building is not at all more convenient for being decorated with superfluous carved work."

Talking of Mr. Barry's exhibition of his pictures. JOHNSON. "Whatever the hand may have done, the mind has done its part. There is a grasp of mind there, which you find no where else."

He thought portrait-painting an improper employment for a woman. "Public practice of any

art," he observed, "and staring in men's faces, is very indelicate in a female."

After having talked slightly of music, he was observed to listen very attentively while Miss Thrale played on the harpsichord, and with eagerness he called to her, "Why don't you dash away like Burney?" Dr. Burney, upon this, said to him, "I believe, sir, we shall make a musician of you at last." Johnson, with candid complacency, replied, "Sir, I shall be glad to have a new sense given to me."

Boswell spoke of Mr. Harris, of Salisbury, as being a very learned man, and, in particular, an eminent Grecian. JOHNSON. "I am not sure of that. His friends give him out as such, but I know not who of his friends are able to judge of it." GOLDSMITH. "He is what is much better: he is a worthy humane man." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, that is not to the purpose of our argument: that will as much prove that he can play upon the fiddle as well as Giardini, as that he is an eminent Grecian." GOLDSMITH. "The greatest musical performers have but small emoluments. Giardini, I am told, does not get above seven hundred a year." JOHNSON. "That is indeed but little for a man to get, who does best that which so many endeavour to do. There is nothing, I think, in which the power of art is shown so much as in playing on the fiddle: in all other things we can do something at first. Any man will forge a bar of iron, if you give him a hammer; not so well as a smith, but tolerably. A man will saw a piece of wood, and make a box, though a clumsy one; but give him a fiddle and a fiddle-stick, and he can do nothing."



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END OF VOL. I.

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# JOHNSONIANA.

VOL. II.



LONDON;  
PUBLISHED BY JOHN SHARPE, PICCADILLY.  
1820.



# **JOHNSONIANA;**

**FROM**

**BOSWELL'S LIFE**

**OF THE**

**GREAT LEXICOGRAPHER AND MORALIST.**

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**VOL. II.**

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**MDCCCXX.**

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**Printed by T. DAVISON,  
Whitefriars.**

# JOHNSONIANA, &c.

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## PART II.

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### No. I.

#### LITERATURE.

WITH respect to the prospects held out to an adventurer in the career of literature, a curious anecdote was communicated by Dr. Johnson himself to Mr. John Nichols. Mr. Wilcox the bookseller, on being informed by him that his intention was to get his livelihood as an author, eyed his robust frame attentively, and, with a significant look, said, "You had better buy a porter's knot." He however added, "Wilcox was one of my best friends."

One of his earliest labours was the compilation of the debates in parliament, for the Gentleman's Magazine, which he did from very slender memorandums. He told a friend, however, that as soon as he found the speeches were thought genuine, he determined he would write no more of them; "for he would not be accessory to the propagation of falsehood." And such was the tenderness of his conscience, that a short time before his death, he expressed his regret for his having been the author of fictions, which had passed for realities.

The rapidity with which he composed is a wonderful circumstance. He has been heard to say, "I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the *Life of Savage* at a sitting; but then I sat up all night."

In a letter to the Rev. T. Warton, he mentions his design of writing a Review. Dr. Adams told Boswell, that this scheme of a *Bibliothèque* was a serious one: for, upon his visiting him one day, he found his parlour floor covered with parcels of foreign and English literary journals, and he told Dr. Adams he meant to undertake a Review. ADAMS. "How, sir, can you think of doing it alone? All branches of knowledge must be considered in it. Do you know mathematics? Do you know natural history?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, I must do as well as I can. My chief purpose is to give my countrymen a view of what is doing in literature upon the continent; and I shall have, in a good measure, the choice of my subject; for I shall select such books as I best understand." ADAMS. "As Dr. Maty has just finished his *Bibliothèque Britannique*, which is a well executed work, giving foreigners an account of British publications, you might, with great advantage, assume him as an assistant." JOHNSON. "*He*, the little black dog! I'd throw him into the Thames." The scheme, however, was dropped.

In one of his little memorandum-books were the following hints for his intended Review, or Literary Journal; "*The Annals of Literature, foreign as well as domestic*. Imitate Le Clerc—Bayle—Barbeyrac; Infelicity of Journals in England; works of the learned: we cannot take in all. Sometimes copy from foreign journalists—always tell."

Having written a preface to Rolt's Dictionary of Trade and Commerce, in which he displays such a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the subject, as might lead the reader to think that its author had devoted all his life to it—Boswell asked him whether he knew much of Rolt, and of his work. "Sir," said he, "I never saw the man, and never read the book. The booksellers wanted a preface to a Dictionary of Trade and Commerce; I knew very well what such a dictionary should be, and I wrote a preface accordingly."

A pension of two hundred pounds a year having been given to Sheridan, Johnson, who thought slightly of Sheridan's art, upon hearing it, exclaimed, "What! have they given *him* a pension? Then it is time for me to give up mine." Whether this proceeded from a momentary indignation, as if it were an affront to his exalted merit that a player should be rewarded in the same manner with him, or was the sudden effect of a fit of peevishness, it was unluckily said, and indeed cannot be justified. Mr. Sheridan's pension was granted to him, not as a player, but as a sufferer in the cause of government, when he was manager of the Theatre Royal in Ireland, when parties ran high in 1753: and it must also be allowed that he was a man of literature, and had considerably improved the arts of reading and speaking with distinctness and propriety.

Johnson afterwards complained, that a man who disliked him, repeated his sarcasm to Mr. Sheridan, without telling him what followed, which was, that after a pause, he added, "However, I am glad that he has a pension, for he is a very good man."

Mrs. Sheridan's novel, entitled, *Memoirs of Miss*

Sydney Biddulph, contains an excellent moral, while it inculcates a future state of retribution; and what it teaches is impressed upon the mind by a series of as deep distress as can affect humanity, in the amiable and pious heroine, who goes to her grave unrelieved, but resigned, and full of hope of "Heaven's mercy." Johnson paid her this high compliment upon it: "I know not, madam, that you have a right, upon moral principles, to make your readers suffer so much."

"People," he remarked, "may be taken in once, who imagine that an author is greater in private life than other men. Uncommon parts require uncommon opportunities for their exertion."

Afterwards: "Sir, this book (*The Elements of Criticism*, which he had taken up), is a pretty essay, and deserves to be held in some estimation, though much of it is chimerical."

At this time the controversy concerning the pieces published by Mr. James Macpherson, as translations of Ossian, was at its height. Johnson had all along denied their authenticity; and what was still more provoking to their admirers, maintained that they had no merit. The subject having been introduced by Dr. Fordyce—Dr. Blair, relying on the internal evidence of their antiquity, asked Dr. Johnson whether he thought any man of a modern age could have written such poems? Johnson replied, "Yes, sir, many men, many women, and many children." Johnson, at this time, did not know that Dr. Blair had just published a dissertation, not only defending their authenticity, but seriously ranking them with the poems of Homer and Virgil; and when he was

afterwards informed of this circumstance, he expressed some displeasure at Dr. Fordyce's having suggested the topic, and said, "I am not sorry that they got thus much for their pains."

"The poem of Fingal," he said, "is a mere unconnected rhapsody, a tiresome repetition of the same images. In vain shall we look for the *lucidus ordo*, where there is neither end or object, design or moral, *nec certa recurrit imago*."

He was vehement on the subject of the Ossian controversy, observing, "We do not know that there are any ancient Erse manuscripts, and we have no other reason to disbelieve that there are men with three heads, but that we do not know that there are any such men." He also was outrageous upon this supposition, that M'Pherson's countrymen "loved Scotland better than truth," saying, "all of them,—nay not all,—but *droves* of them, would come up, and attest any thing for the honour of Scotland."

Another time, Ossian being mentioned—JOHNSON. "Supposing the Irish and Erse languages to be the same, which I do not believe—yet, as there is no reason to suppose that the inhabitants of the Highlands and Hebrides ever wrote their native language, it is not to be credited that a long poem was preserved among them. If we had no evidence of the art of writing being practised in one of the counties of England, we should not believe that a long poem was preserved *there*, though in the neighbouring counties, where the same language was spoken, the inhabitants could write." BEAUCLERK. "The ballad of Lilliburlero was once in the mouths of all the people of this country, and is said to have had a

great effect in bringing about the Revolution ; yet, I question whether any body can repeat it now ; which shows how improbable it is that much poetry should be preserved by tradition."

One of the company suggested an internal objection to the antiquity of the poetry said to be Ossian's, that we do not find the wolf in it, which must have been the case had it been of that age.

Johnson informed Boswell that he made the bargain for Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, and the price was sixty pounds. "And sir," said he, "a sufficient price too, when it was sold ; for then the fame of Goldsmith had not been elevated, as it afterwards was, by his *Traveller* ; and the bookseller had such faint hopes of profit by his bargain, that he kept the manuscript by him a long time, and did not publish it till after *The Traveller* had appeared. Then, to be sure, it was accidentally worth more money."

Boswell mentioned the periodical paper called *The Connoisseur* : Johnson said it wanted matter. "No doubt," adds the former, "it has not the deep thinking of Johnson's writings ; but, surely, it has just views of the surface of life, and a very sprightly manner. His opinion of *The World* was not much higher than of the *Connoisseur*."

Mr. Alexander Donaldson, bookseller of Edinburgh, had for some time opened a shop in London, and sold his cheap editions of the most popular English books, in defiance of the supposed common-law right of *literary property*. Johnson, though he concurred in the opinion, which was afterwards sanctioned by a judgment of the house of lords, that there was no such right—was at this time very an-

gry, that the booksellers of London, for whom he uniformly professed much regard, should suffer from an invasion of what they had ever considered to be secure; and he was loud and violent against Mr. Donaldson. "He is a fellow who takes advantage of the law to injure his brethren; for notwithstanding that the statute secures only fourteen years of exclusive right, it has always been understood by *the trade*, that he who buys the copy-right of a book from the author, obtains a perpetual property; and, upon that belief, numberless bargains are made to transfer that property after the expiration of the statutory term. Now Donaldson, I say, takes advantage here of people who have really an equitable title from usage; and if we consider how few of the books, of which they buy the property, succeed so well as to bring profit, we should be of opinion, that the term of fourteen years is too short; it should be sixty years." DEMPSTER. "Donaldson, sir, is anxious for the encouragement of literature. He reduces the price of books, so that poor students may buy them." JOHNSON. (laughing) "Well, sir, allowing that to be his motive, he is no better than Robin Hood, who robbed the rich in order to give to the poor."

It is remarkable, that when the great question concerning literary property came to be ultimately tried before the supreme tribunal of this country, in consequence of the very spirited exertions of Mr. Donaldson, Dr. Johnson was zealous against a perpetuity; but he thought that the term of the exclusive right of authors should be considerably enlarged. He was then for granting a hundred years.



On another occasion, he thus descanted on the subject of literary property: "There seems to be in authors a stronger right of property than that by occupancy; a metaphysical right, a right as it were of creation, which should, from its nature, be perpetual; but the consent of nations is against it: and indeed reason, and the interest of learning are against it; for were it to be perpetual, no book, however useful, could be universally diffused amongst mankind, should the proprietor take it into his head to restrain its circulation: no book could have the advantage of being edited with notes, however necessary to its elucidation, should the proprietor perversely oppose it. For the general good of the world, therefore, whatever valuable work has once been created by an author, and issued out by him, should be understood as no longer in his power, but as belonging to the public; at the same time, the author is entitled to an adequate reward: this he should have by an exclusive right to his work for a considerable number of years."

He said, Dr. Joseph Warton was a very agreeable man, and his *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, a very pleasing book. Boswell wondered that he delayed so long to give us the continuation of it. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, I suppose he finds himself a little disappointed, in not having been able to persuade the world to be of his opinion as to Pope."

Dr. Johnson frequently visited the library at Buckingham-house. His majesty having been informed of his occasional visits, was pleased to signify a desire that he should be told when Dr. Johnson came next to the library. Accordingly, the

next time that Johnson did come, as soon as he was fairly engaged with a book, on which, while he sat by the fire, he seemed quite intent, Mr. Barnard stole round to the apartment where the king was, and, in obedience to his majesty's commands, mentioned that Dr. Johnson was then in the library. His majesty said he was at leisure, and would go to him; upon which Mr. Barnard took one of the candles that stood on the king's table, and lighted his majesty through a suite of rooms, till they came to a private door into the library, of which his majesty had the key. Being entered, Mr. Barnard stepped forward hastily to Dr. Johnson, who was still in a profound study, and whispered him, "Sir, here is the king." Johnson started up, and stood still: his majesty approached him, and at once was courteously easy.

His majesty began by observing, that he understood he came sometimes to the library; and then, mentioning his having heard that the doctor had been lately at Oxford, asked him if he was not fond of going thither. To which Johnson answered, that he was indeed fond of going to Oxford sometimes, but was likewise glad to come back again. The king then asked him what they were doing at Oxford. Johnson answered, he could not much commend their diligence, but that in some respects they were mended, for they had put their press under better regulations, and were at that time printing Polybius. He was then asked whether there were better libraries at Oxford or Cambridge. He answered, he believed the Bodleian was larger than any they had at Cambridge, at the same time adding, "I hope, whether we have more books or not

than they have at Cambridge, we shall make as good use of them as they do." Being asked whether All-Souls or Christ-Church library was the largest, he answered, "All Souls library is the largest we have, except the Bodleian."—"Ay," said the king, "that is the public library."

His majesty inquired if he was then writing any thing. He answered, he was not, for he had pretty well told the world what he knew, and must now read to acquire more knowledge. The king, as it should seem, with a view to urge him to rely on his own stores as an original writer, and to continue his labours, then said, "I do not think you borrow much from any body." Johnson said, he thought he had already done his part as a writer. "I should have thought so too," said the king, "if you had not written so well." Johnson observed to me upon this, that "No man could have paid a handsomer compliment, and it was fit for a king to pay. It was decisive." When asked by another friend at sir Joshua Reynolds's, whether he made any reply to this high compliment, he answered, "No, sir; when the king had said it, it was to be so: it was not for me to bandy civilities with my sovereign." Perhaps, no man, who had spent his whole life in courts, could have shown a more nice and dignified sense of true politeness, than Johnson did in this instance.

His majesty having observed to him, that he supposed he must have read a great deal, Johnson answered, that he thought more than he read; that he had read a great deal in the early part of his life; but having fallen into ill health, he had not been able to read much, compared with others; for in-

stance, he said, he had not read much, compared with Dr. Warburton. Upon which, the king said, that he heard Dr. Warburton was a man of such general knowledge, that you could scarce talk with him on any subject on which he was not qualified to speak; and that his learning resembled Garrick's acting, in its universality. His majesty then talked of the controversy between Warburton and Lowth, which he seemed to have read, and asked Johnson what he thought of it. Johnson answered, "Warburton has most general, most scholastic learning; Lowth is the more correct scholar. I do not know which of them calls names best." The king was pleased to say he was of the same opinion; adding, "You do not think then, Dr. Johnson, that there was much argument in the case?" Johnson said, he did not think there was. "Why, truly," said the king, "when once it comes to calling names, argument is pretty well at an end."

His majesty then asked him what he thought of Lord Lyttelton's history, which was just published. Johnson said, he thought his style pretty good, but that he had blamed Henry the Second rather too much. "Why," said the king, "they seldom do these things by halves." "No, sir," answered Johnson, "not to kings." But, fearing to be misunderstood, he proceeded to explain himself; and immediately subjoined, "That for those who spoke worse of kings than they deserved, he could find no excuse; but that he could more easily conceive how some might speak better of them than they deserved, without any ill intention; for, as kings had much in their power to give, those who were favoured by them would frequently, from

gratitude, exaggerate their praises; and as this proceeded from a good motive, it was certainly excusable, as far as error could be excusable."

The king then asked him what he thought of Dr. Hill. Johnson answered, that he was an ingenious man, but had no veracity; and immediately mentioned, as an instance of it, an assertion of that writer, that he had seen objects magnified to a much greater degree by using three or four microscopes at a time than by using one. "Now," added Johnson, "every one acquainted with microscopes knows, that the more of them he looks through, the less the object will appear."\* "Why," replied the king, "this is not only telling an untruth, but telling it clumsily; for, if that be the case, every one who can look through a microscope will be able to detect him."

"I now," said Johnson to his friends, when relating what had passed, "began to consider that I was depreciating this man in the estimation of his sovereign, and thought it was time for me to say something that might be more favourable." He added, therefore, that Dr. Hill was, notwithstanding, a very curious observer; and if he would have been contented to tell the world no more than he knew, he might have been a very considerable man, and needed not to have recourse to such mean expedients to raise his reputation.

The king then talked of literary journals, mentioned particularly the *Journal des Savans*, and asked Johnson if it was well done. Johnson said,

\* In this assertion, Johnson showed his own ignorance of the subject.—Ed.

it was formerly very well done ; and gave some account of the persons who began it, and carried it on for some years ; enlarging, at the same time, on the nature and use of such works. The king then asked him if it was well done now. Johnson answered, he had no reason to think that it was. The king then asked him if there were any other literary journals published in this kingdom, except the *Monthly and Critical Reviews* ; and on being answered, there was no other, his majesty asked which of them was the best : Johnson answered, that the *Monthly Review* was done with most care, the *Critical* upon the best principles ; adding, that the authors of the *Monthly Review* were enemies to the church : this, the king said he was sorry to hear.

The conversation next turned on the *Philosophical Transactions*, when Johnson observed, that they had now a better method of arranging their materials than formerly. " Ay," said the king, " they are obliged to Dr. Johnson for that ;" for his majesty had heard and remembered the circumstance, which Johnson himself had forgot.

His majesty expressed a desire to have the literary biography of this country ably executed, and proposed to Dr. Johnson to undertake it. Johnson signified his readiness to comply with his majesty's wishes.

During the whole of this interview, Johnson talked to his majesty with profound respect, but still in his firm, manly manner, with a sonorous voice, and never in that subdued tone, which is commonly used at the levee, and in the drawing room. After the king withdrew, Johnson showed

himself highly pleased with his majesty's conversation and gracious behaviour. He said to Mr. Barnard, "Sir, they may talk of the king as they will, but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen." And he afterwards observed to Mr. Langton, "Sir, his manners are those of as fine a gentleman as we may suppose Louis the Fourteenth, or Charles the Second."

Mrs. Montague, a lady distinguished for having written an Essay on Shakspeare, being mentioned : —REYNOLDS. "I think that Essay does her honour." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, it does *her* honour, but it would do nobody else honour. I have, indeed, not read it all; but when I take up the end of a web, and find it packthread, I do not expect, by looking farther, to find embroidery. Sir, I will venture to say, there is not one sentence of true criticism in her book." GARRICK: "But, sir, surely it shows how much Voltaire has mistaken Shakspeare, which nobody else has done." JOHNSON. "Sir, nobody else has thought it worth while; and what merit is there in that? You may as well praise a school-master for whipping a boy who has construed ill. No, sir, there is no real criticism in it; none, showing the beauty of thought, as formed on the workings of the human heart." \*

Johnson proceeded—"The Scotchman has taken the right method in his Elements of Criticism. I do not mean that he has taught us any thing; but he has told us old things in a new way." MURPHY. "He seems to have read a great deal of French

\* As an answer, however, to Voltaire, Johnson allowed it the merit of being conclusive *ad hominem*.

criticism, and wants to make it his own ; as if he had been for years anatomising the heart of man, and peeping into every cranny of it." GOLDSMITH. " It is easier to write that book than to read it." JOHNSON. " We have an example of true criticism in Burke's Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful ; and, if I recollect, there is also Du Bos ; and Bouhours, who shows all beauty to depend on truth. There is no great merit in telling how many plays have ghosts in them, and how this ghost is better than that. You must show how terror is impressed on the human heart.—In the description of night in Macbeth, the beetle and the bat detract from the general idea of darkness,—inspissated gloom."

Johnson spoke unfavourably of a certain pretty voluminous author, saying, " He used to write anonymous books, and then other books commending those books, in which there was something of rascality."

He said, " I am very unwilling to read the manuscripts of authors, and give them my opinion. If the authors who apply to me have money, I bid them boldly print without a name ; if they have written in order to get money, I tell them to go to the booksellers, and make the best bargain they can." BOSWELL. " But, sir, if a bookseller should bring you a manuscript to look at ?" JOHNSON. " Why, sir, I would desire the bookseller to take it away."

He talked with approbation of an intended edition of the Spectator, with notes ; two volumes of which had been prepared by a gentleman eminent in the literary world, and the materials which he had collected for the remainder had been transfer-



red to another hand. He observed, that all works, which describe manners, require notes in sixty or seventy years, or less; and told us, he had communicated all he knew that could throw light upon the Spectator. He said, Addison had made his sir Andrew Freeport a true Whig, arguing against giving charity to beggars, and throwing out other such ungracious sentiments; but that he had thought better, and made amends by making him found an hospital for decayed farmers. He called for the volume of the Spectator, in which that account is contained, and read it aloud to the company: he read so well, that every thing acquired additional weight and grace from his utterance.

"What an expense, sir," said Boswell to him, "do you put us to, in buying books to which you have written prefaces or dedications!" JOHNSON. "Why I have dedicated to the royal family all round; that is to say, to the last generation of the royal family." GOLDSMITH. "And, perhaps, sir, not one sentence of wit in a whole dedication." JOHNSON. "Perhaps not, sir." BOSWELL. "What then is the reason for applying to a particular person to do that which any one may do as well?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, one man has greater readiness at doing it than another."

Mr. Andrew Stuart's elegant and plausible Letters to Lord Mansfield, a copy of which had been sent by the author to Dr. Johnson, were mentioned. JOHNSON. "They have not answered the end: they have not been talked of; I have never heard of them. This is owing to their not being sold: people seldom read a book which is given to them; and few are given. The way to spread a work is to

sell it at a low price : no man will send to buy a thing that costs even sixpence, without an intention to read it."

The character of Mallet having been introduced, and spoken of slightly by Goldsmith : JOHNSON. "Why, sir, Mallet had talents enough to keep his literary reputation alive as long as he himself lived ; and that, let me tell you, is a good deal. GOLDSMITH. "But I cannot agree that it was so : his literary reputation was dead long before his natural death. I consider an author's literary reputation to be alive only while his name will insure a good price for his copy from the booksellers. I will get you (to Johnson) a hundred guineas for any thing whatever that you shall write, if you put your name to it."

Speaking of Rolt, to whose Dictionary of Commerce Dr. Johnson wrote the preface. JOHNSON. "Old Gardner the bookseller employed Rolt and Smart to write a monthly miscellany, called *The Universal Visitor*. There was a formal written contract, which Allen the printer saw. They were bound to write nothing else ; they were to have, I think, a third of the profits of his sixpenny pamphlet ; and the contract was for ninety-nine years. I wish I had thought of giving this to Thurlow, in the cause about literary property : what an excellent instance would it have been of the oppression of booksellers towards poor authors !" (smiling) Davies, zealous for the honour of *the trade*, said, Gardner was not properly a bookseller. JOHNSON. "Nay, sir ; he certainly was a bookseller : he had served his time regularly, was a member of the stationers' company, kept a shop in the face of man-

kind, purchased copy-right, and was a *bibliopole*, sir, in every sense. I wrote for some months in the *Universal Visitor*, for poor Smart, while he was mad; not then knowing the terms on which he was engaged to write, and thinking I was doing him good. I hoped his wits would soon return to him: mine returned to me, and I wrote in the *Universal Visitor* no longer."

Johnson nobly said, when Boswell talked to him of the feeble, though shrill outcry, that had been raised against his *Lives of the Poets*, "Sir, I considered myself as entrusted with a certain portion of truth. I have given my opinion sincerely—let them show where they think me wrong."

Boswell censured some ludicrous fantastic dialogues between two coach horses, and other such stuff, which Barette had lately published. Johnson joined with Boswell, and said, "Nothing odd will do long: *Tristram Shandy* did not last."

Boswell mentioned Dr. Adam Smith's book on the *Wealth of Nations*, which was just published; and that sir John Pringle had observed to him, that Dr. Smith, who had never been in trade, could not be expected to write well on that subject, any more than a lawyer upon physic. JOHNSON. "He is mistaken, sir: a man who has never been engaged in trade himself may undoubtedly write well upon trade; and there is nothing which requires more to be illustrated by philosophy, than trade does. As to mere wealth, that is to say, money, it is clear, that one nation or one individual cannot increase its store but by making another poorer: but trade procures what is more valuable, the reciprocation of the peculiar advantages of different countries

A merchant seldom thinks but of his own particular trade. To write a good book upon it, a man must have extensive views. It is not necessary to have practised, to write well upon a subject." BOSWELL. "Law is a subject, on which no man can write well without practice." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, in England, where so much money is to be got by the practice of the law, most of our writers upon it have been in practice; though Blackstone had not been much in practice when he published his Commentaries; but upon the continent, the great writers on law have not all been in practice: Grotius indeed was; but Puffendorf was not; Burlamaqui was not."

## No. II.

## AUTHORS.

IN 1745, Johnson published a pamphlet, entitled "Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth, with Remarks on sir T. H.'s (sir Thomas Hanmer's) Edition of Shakspeare;" to which he affixed proposals for a new edition of that poet. This pamphlet was highly esteemed, and was fortunate enough to obtain the approbation even of the supercilious Warburton himself, who, in the preface to his Shakspeare, published two years afterwards, thus mentioned it: "As to all those things which have been published under the titles of Essays, Remarks, Observations, &c. on Shakspeare, if you except some Critical Notes on Macbeth, given as a specimen of a projected edition, and written,

as appears, by a man of parts and genius, the rest are absolutely below a serious notice."

Of this flattering distinction shown to him by Warburton, a very grateful remembrance was ever entertained by Johnson, who said, "He praised me at a time when praise was of value to me."

The year 1747 is distinguished as the epoch when Johnson's arduous work, his **DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**, was announced to the world by the publication of its Plan or Prospectus. The booksellers who contracted with Johnson, single and unaided, for the execution of a work, which, in other countries, has not been effected but by the co-operating exertions of many, were Mr. Robert Dodsley, Mr. Charles Hitch, Mr. Andrew Millar, the two Messieurs Longman, and the two Messieurs Knapton. The price stipulated was fifteen hundred guineas.

The Plan was addressed to Philip Dormer, earl of Chesterfield, then one of his majesty's principal secretaries of state—a nobleman who was very ambitious of literary distinction, and who, upon being informed of the design, had expressed himself in terms very favourable to its success. There is, perhaps, in every thing of any consequence, a secret history, which it would be amusing to know, could we have it authentically communicated. Johnson told Boswell, "Sir, the way in which the plan of my Dictionary came to be inscribed to lord Chesterfield, was this: I had neglected to write it by the time appointed; Dodsley suggested a desire to have it addressed to lord Chesterfield; I laid hold of this as a pretext for delay, that it might be better done, and let Dodsley

have his desire. I said to my friend, Dr. Bathurst, 'Now if any good comes of my addressing to lord Chesterfield, it will be ascribed to deep policy, when, in fact, it was only a casual excuse for laziness.' "

Dr. Taylor told Boswell, that Johnson sent his Plan to him in manuscript, for his perusal; and that when it was lying upon his table, Mr. William Whitehead happened to pay him a visit, and being shown it, was highly pleased with such parts of it as he had time to read, and begged to take it home with him, which he was allowed to do; that ~~soon~~ him it got into the hands of a noble lord, who carried it to lord Chesterfield. When Taylor observed that this might be an advantage, Johnson replied, "No, sir, it would have come out with more bloom, if it had not been seen before by any body."

Dr. Adams found him one day busy at his Dictionary, when the following dialogue ensued:—  
 ADAMS. "This is a great work, sir: how are you to get all the etymologies?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, here is a shelf with Junius, and Skinner, and others; and there is a Welsh gentleman who has published a collection of Welsh proverbs, who will help me with the Welsh." ADAMS. "But, sir, how can you do this in three years?" JOHNSON. "Sir, I have no doubt that I can do it in three years." ADAMS. "But the French Academy, which consists of forty members, took forty years to compile their Dictionary." JOHNSON. "Sir, thus it is; this is the proportion: let me see—forty times forty is sixteen hundred: as three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman." With so much ease and plea-

santry could he talk of that prodigious labour which he had undertaken to execute.

When the Dictionary was upon the eve of publication, lord Chesterfield, who, it is said, had flattered himself with expectations that Johnson would dedicate the work to him, attempted, in a courtly manner, to soothe and insinuate himself with the sage, conscious, as it should seem, of the cold indifference with which he had treated its learned author ; and farther attempted to conciliate him, by writing two papers in *The World*, in recommendation of the work ; and it must be confessed, that they contain some studied compliments, so finely turned, that, if there had been no previous offence, it is probable Johnson would have been highly delighted. Praise, in general, was pleasing to him ; but, by praise from a man of rank and elegant accomplishments, he was peculiarly gratified.

This courtly device failed of its effect. Johnson, who thought that " all was false and hollow," despised the honeyed words, and was even indignant that lord Chesterfield should, for a moment, imagine that he could be the dupe of such an artifice. His expression to Boswell concerning lord Chesterfield, upon this occasion, was, " Sir, after making great professions, he had, for many years, taken no notice of me ; but when my Dictionary was coming out, he fell a scribbling in *The World* about it : upon which, I wrote him a letter, expressed in civil terms, but such as might show him that I did not mind what he said or wrote, and that I had done with him."

Dr. Johnson appeared to have had a remarkable delicacy with respect to the circulation of this let-

ter ; for Dr. Douglas, bishop of Salisbury, informed Boswell, that, having many years ago pressed him to be allowed to read it to the second lord Hardwicke, who was very desirous to hear it (promising, at the same time, that no copy of it should be taken) ; Johnson seemed much pleased, that it had attracted the attention of a nobleman of such a respectable character ; but, after pausing some time, declined to comply with the request ; saying, with a smile, “ No, sir, I have hurt the dog too much already ;” or words to this purpose.

Dr. Adams expostulated with Johnson, and suggested, that his not being admitted when he called on him, to which Johnson had alluded in his letter, was probably not to be imputed to lord Chesterfield ; for his lordship had declared to Dodsley, that “ he would have turned off the best servant he ever had, if he had known that he denied him to a man who would have been always more than welcome ;” and in confirmation of this, he insisted on lord Chesterfield’s general affability and easiness of access, especially to literary men. JOHNSON. “ Sir, that is not lord Chesterfield ; he is the proudest man this day existing.” ADAMS. “ No, there is one person, at least, as proud ; I think, by your own account, you are the prouder man of the two.” JOHNSON. “ But mine was *defensive* pride.” This, as Dr. Adams well observed, was one of those happy turns, for which he was so remarkably ready.

Johnson having now explicitly avowed his opinion of lord Chesterfield, did not refrain from expressing himself concerning that nobleman with pointed freedom : “ This man,” said he, “ I thought had been a lord among wits, but I find he is only a



wit among lords!" And when his letters to his natural son were published, he observed, "they teach the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing-master."

In 1776, Boswell showed him as a curiosity which he had discovered, his Translation of Lobo's Account of Abyssinia, which sir John Pringle had lent, it being then little known as one of his works. He said, "Take no notice of it," or, "don't talk of it." He seemed to think it beneath him, though done at six and twenty. Boswell said to him, "Your style, sir, is much improved since you translated this." He answered, with a sort of triumphant smile, "Sir, I hope it is."

Mr. afterwards Dr. Burney, during a visit to the capital, had an interview with him in Gough-square, where he dined and drank tea with him, and was introduced to the acquaintance of Mrs. Williams. After dinner, Dr. Johnson proposed to Mr. Burney to go up with him into his garret, which being accepted, he there found five or six Greek folios, a deal writing-desk, and a chair and a half. Johnson, giving to his guest the entire seat, tottered himself on one with only three legs and one arm. Here he gave Mr. Burney Mrs. Williams's history, and showed him some volumes of his Shakspeare already printed, to prove that he was in earnest. Upon Mr. Burney's opening the first volume, at the Merchant of Venice, he observed to him, that he seemed to be more severe on Warburton than Theobald. JOHNSON. "O poor Tib! he was ready knocked down to my hands; Warburton stands between me and him." BURNLEY. "But, sir, you'll have Warburton upon your bones, won't you?" JOHNSON.

"No, sir, he'll not come out; he'll only growl in his den." BURNEY. "But you think, sir, that Warburton is a superior critic to Theobald?" JOHNSON. "O, sir, he'd make two and fifty Theobalds, cut into slices! The worst of Warburton is, that he has a rage for saying something, when there's nothing to be said." BURNEY. "Have you seen the letters which Warburton has written in answer to a pamphlet, addressed To the most impudent Man alive?" JOHNSON. "No, sir." BURNEY. "It is supposed to be written by Mallet." The controversy at this time raged between the friends of Pope and Bolingbroke; and Warburton and Mallet were the leaders of the several parties. Mr. Burney asked him then if he had seen Warburton's book against Bolingbroke's Philosophy? JOHNSON. "No, sir, I have never read Bolingbroke's impiety, and therefore am not interested about its confutation."

Sir Thomas Robinson sitting with Johnson, said, that the king of Prussia valued himself upon three things;—upon being a hero, a musician, and an author. JOHNSON. "Pretty well, sir, for one man. As to his being an author, I have not looked at his poetry; but his prose is poor stuff: he writes just as you may suppose Voltaire's footboy to do, who has been his amanuensis. He has such parts as the valet might have, and about as much of the colouring of the style as might be got by transcribing his works." When Boswell was at Ferney, he repeated this to Voltaire, in order to reconcile him somewhat to Johnson, whom he, in affecting the English mode of expression, had previously characterised as "a superstitious dog;" but after hearing such a criticism on Frederick the Great, with whom he was

then on bad terms, he exclaimed, "An honest fellow!"

Upon this contemptuous animadversion on the king of Prussia, Boswell observed to Johnson, "It would seem then, sir, that much less parts are necessary to make a king, than to make an author; for the king of Prussia is confessedly the greatest king now in Europe, yet you think he makes a very poor figure as an author."

Of the celebrated dean of St. Patrick's, Johnson said, "Swift has a higher reputation than he deserves. His excellence is strong sense; for his humour, though very well, is not remarkably good. I doubt whether the Tale of a Tub be his; for he never owned it, and it is much above his usual manner."

Another time, Swift having been mentioned, Johnson, as usual, treated him with little respect as an author. Some of the company endeavoured to support the dean by various arguments; one, in particular, praised his Conduct of the Allies. JOHNSON. "Sir, his Conduct of the Allies is a performance of very little ability." DR. DOUGLAS. "Surely, sir, you must allow it has strong facts." JOHNSON. "Why yes, sir; but what is that to the merit of the composition? In the Sessions-paper of the Old Bailey there are strong facts: house-breaking is a strong fact; robbery is a strong fact; and murder is a *mighty* strong fact: but, is great praise due to the historian of those strong facts? No, sir; Swift has told what he had to tell distinctly enough, but that is all. He had to count ten, and he has counted it right."—Then recollecting that Mr. Davies, by acting as an *inform*er, had been the occasion of his

talking somewhat too harshly to his friend Dr. Percy, for which probably, when the first ebullition was over, he felt some compunction—he took an opportunity to give him a hit; so added, with a preparatory laugh, “Why, sir, Tom Davies might have written the *Conduct of the Allies*.” Poor Tom being suddenly dragged into ludicrous notice in presence of the Scottish doctors, to whom he was ambitious of appearing to advantage, was grievously mortified. Nor did his punishment rest here; for, upon subsequent occasions, whenever he, “statesman all o’er,” assumed a strutting importance, Boswell used to hail him—“*The author of the Conduct of the Allies*.”

Johnson, in high spirits one evening at the club, attacked Swift, as he used to do upon all occasions. “The *Tale of a Tub* is so much superior to his other writings, that one can hardly believe he was the author of it; there is in it such a vigour of mind, such a swarm of thoughts, so much of nature, and art, and life.” Boswell wondered to hear him say of *Gulliver’s Travels*, “When once you have thought of big men and little men, it is very easy to do all the rest.” He endeavoured to make a stand for Swift, and tried to rouse those who were much more able to defend him, but in vain. Johnson, at last, of his own accord, allowed very great merit to the inventory of articles found in the pocket of “the *Man Mountain*,” particularly the description of his watch, which it was conjectured was his god, as he consulted it upon all occasions. He observed, that “Swift put his name to but two things (after he had a name to put), *The Plan for the Improvement*

of the English language, and the last Drapler's Letter."

Johnson laughed heartily when Boswell mentioned to him a saying of his concerning Mr. Thomas Sheridan, which Foote took a wicked pleasure to circulate. "Why, sir, Sherry is dull; naturally dull: but it must have taken him a great deal of pains to become what we now see him: such an excess of stupidity, sir, is not in nature; so I allowed him all his own merit."

He now added, "Sheridan cannot bear me. I bring his declamation to a point: I ask him a plain question, 'What do you mean to teach?' Beside, sir, what influence can Mr. Sheridan have upon the language of this great country, by his narrow exertions? Sir, it is burning a farthing candle at Dover, to show light at Calais."

Talking of a barrister, who had a bad utterance, some one, to rouse Johnson, wickedly said, that he was unfortunate in not having been taught oratory by Sheridan. JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, if he had been taught by Sheridan, he would have cleared the room." GARRICK. "Sheridan has too much vanity to be a good man." We shall now see Johnson's mode of *defending* a man; taking him into his own hands, and discriminating. JOHNSON. "No, sir; there is, to be sure, in Sheridan, something to reprehend, and every thing to laugh at; but, sir, he is not a bad man. No, sir; were mankind to be divided into good and bad, he would stand considerably within the ranks of good: and, sir, it must be allowed that Sheridan excels in plain declamation, though he can exhibit no character."

Of this gentleman, on a subsequent occasion, he remarked, "that he neither wanted parts nor literature; but his vanity and Quixotism obscured his merits."

Boswell expressed his opinion of his friend Derrick, as but a poor writer. JOHNSON. "To be sure, sir, he is; but you are to consider, that his being a literary man has got for him all that he has; it has made him king of Bath. Sir, he has nothing to say for himself but that he is a writer; had he not been a writer, he must have been sweeping the crossings in the streets, and asking halfpence from every body that passed."

"In justice, however, to the memory of Mr. Derrick," adds Boswell, "who was my first tutor in the ways of London, and showed me the town in all its variety of departments, both literary and sportive, the particulars of which Dr. Johnson advised me to put into writing—it is proper to mention what Johnson, at a subsequent period, said of him, both as a writer and an editor: 'Sir, I have often said, that if Derrick's letters had been written by one of a more established name, they would have been thought very pretty letters.' And, 'I sent Derrick to Dryden's relations, to gather materials for his life; and I believe he got all that I myself should have got.'"

Johnson said once to Boswell, "Sir, I honour Derrick for his presence of mind. One night, when Floyd, another poor author, was wandering about the streets in the night, he found Derrick fast asleep upon a bulk. Upon being suddenly waked, Derrick started up: 'My dear Floyd, I am sorry to see you in this destitute state; will you go home with me to *my lodgings*?'"

One evening, when some of Dr. Kenrick's works were mentioned, Goldsmith said he had never heard of them ; upon which Dr. Johnson observed, " Sir, he is one of the many who have made themselves public, without making themselves *known*."

Of Guthrie, he said, " Sir, he is a man of parts. He has no great regular fund of knowledge ; but, by reading so long, and writing so long, he no doubt has picked up a good deal."

He praised Signor Baretti. " His account of Italy is a very entertaining book ; and, sir, I know no man who carries his head higher in conversation than Baretti. There are strong powers in his mind. He has not, indeed, many hooks ; but with what hooks he has, he grapples very forcibly."

Lord Lyttelton's Dialogues he deemed a nugatory performance. " That man," said he, " sat down to write a book, to tell the world what the world had all his life been telling him."

Speaking of Boethius, who was the favourite writer of the middle ages, he said it was very surprising ; " that upon such a subject, and in such a situation, he should be *magis philosophus quam Christianus*."

Of the late Mr. Mallet he spoke with no great respect ; said, he was ready for any dirty job ; that he had written against Byng at the instigation of the ministry, and was equally ready to write for him, provided he found his account in it.

Of Dr. Kennicott's Collations, he observed, that, though the text should not be much mended thereby, yet it was no small advantage to know that we had as good a text as the most consummate industry and diligence could procure.

Speaking of the old earl of Cork and Orrery, he said, "that man spent his life in catching at an object [literary eminence], which he had not power to grasp."

Of Burke he said, "It was commonly observed, he spoke too often in parliament; but nobody could say he did not speak well, though too frequently, and too familiarly."

Talking of Tacitus, Boswell hazarded an opinion, that with all his merit for penetration, shrewdness of judgment, and terseness of expression, he was too compact, too much broken into hints, as it were, and therefore too difficult to be understood. Dr. Johnson sanctioned this opinion. "Tacitus, sir, seems to me rather to have made notes for an historical work, than to have written a history."\*

He said, "Burnet's History of his own Times is very entertaining: the style, indeed, is mere chit-chat. I do not believe that Burnet intentionally lied; but he was so much prejudiced, that he took no pains to find out the truth. He was like a man who resolves to regulate his time by a certain watch, but will not inquire, whether the watch is right or not."

Goldsmith being mentioned—JOHNSON. "It is amazing how little Goldsmith knows: he seldom comes where he is not more ignorant than any one else." SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. "Yet, there is no man whose company is more liked." JOHNSON. "To be sure, sir, when people find a man of the

\* Lord Monboddo, whom, on account of his resembling Dr. Johnson in some particulars, Foote called an Elsevir edition of him, has made the same remark.



most distinguished abilities as a writer, their inferior while he is with them, it must be highly gratifying to them. What Goldsmith comically says of himself, is very true—he always gets the better when he argues alone; meaning, that he is master of a subject in his study, and can write well upon it; but when he comes into company, he grows confused, and unable to talk. Take him as a poet, his Traveller is a very fine performance; ay, and so is his Deserted Village, were it not sometimes too much the echo of his Traveller. Whether, indeed, we take him as a poet, as a comic writer, or as an historian—he stands in the first class” BOSWELL. “An historian! my dear sir, you will surely not rank his compilation of the Roman history with the works of other historians of this age?” JOHNSON. “Why, who are before him?” BOSWELL. “Hume,—Robertson,—Lord Lyttelton.” JOHNSON. (His antipathy to the Scotch beginning to rise.) “I have not read Hume; but, doubtless, Goldsmith’s History is better than the *verbiage* of Robertson, or the foppery of Dalrymple.” BOSWELL. “Will you not admit the superiority of Robertson, in whose history we find such penetration—such painting?” JOHNSON. “Sir, you must consider how that penetration and that painting are employed; it is not history, it is imagination. He who describes what he never saw, draws from fancy. Robertson paints minds, as sir Joshua paints faces in a history piece; he imagines an heroic countenance. You must look upon Robertson’s work as romance, and try it by that standard: history it is not. Besides, sir, it is the great excellence of a writer to put into his book as much as his book will hold. Goldsmith has

done this in his History. Now, Robertson might have put twice as much into his book. Robertson is like a man who has packed gold in wool; the wool takes up more room than the gold. No, sir; I always thought Robertson would be crushed by his own weight—would be buried under his own ornaments. Goldsmith tells you shortly all you want to know: Robertson detains you a deal too long. No man will read Robertson's cumbrous detail a second time; but Goldsmith's plain narrative will please again and again. I would say to Robertson what an old tutor of a college said to one of his pupils: 'Read over your compositions; and wherever you meet with a passage which you think is particularly fine, strike it out.' Goldsmith's abridgement is better than that of Lucius Florus, or Eutropius; and I will venture to say, that if you compare him with Vertot, in the same places of the Roman History, you will find that he excels Vertot. Sir, he has the art of compiling, and of saying every thing he has to say in a pleasing manner. He is now writing a Natural History, and will make it as entertaining as a Persian Tale."

Boswell adds, "I cannot dismiss the present topic without observing, that it is probable that Dr. Johnson, who owned that he often 'talked for victory,' rather urged plausible objections to Dr. Robertson's excellent historical works, in the ardour of contest, than expressed his real and decided opinion; for it is not easy to suppose, that he should so widely differ from the rest of the literary world."

Johnson praised John Bunyan highly. His *Pilgrim's Progress* has great merit both for invention,

imagination, and the conduct of the story ; and it has had the best evidence of its merit, the general and continued approbation of mankind : few books, I believe, have had a more extensive sale. It is remarkable, that it begins very much like the poem of Dante ; yet there was no translation of Dante when Bunyan wrote. There is reason to think that he had read Spenser."

Some of the company expressed a wonder, why the author of so excellent a book as the *Whole Duty of Man* should conceal himself. JOHNSON. "There may be different reasons assigned for this, any one of which would be very sufficient. He may have been a clergyman, and may have thought that his religious counsels would have less weight when known to come from a man whose profession was theology. He may have been a man whose practice was not suitable to his principles ; so that his character might injure the effect of his book, which he had written in a season of penitence. Or, he may have been a man of rigid self-denial ; so that he would have no reward for his pious labours while in this world, but refer it all to a future state."

He talked of Isaac Walton's *Lives*, which was one of his most favourite books : Dr. Donne's *Life*, he said, was the most perfect of them. He observed, that "it was wonderful that Walton, who was in a very low situation in life, should have been familiarly received by so many great men, and that at a time when the ranks of society were kept more separate than they are now."

Johnson praised the *Spectator*, particularly the character of sir Roger de Coverley. He said, "Sir Roger did not die a violent death, as has generally

been fancied : he was not killed ; he died only because others were to die, and because his death afforded an opportunity to Addison of some very fine writing. We have the example of Cervantes making Don Quixote die. I never could see why sir Roger is represented as a little cracked. It appears to me, that the story of the widow was intended to have something superinduced upon it ; but the superstructure did not come."

Talking of the eminent writers in queen Anne's reign, he observed, " I think Dr. Arbuthnot the first man among them : he was the most universal genius ; being an excellent physician, a man of deep learning, and a man of much humour. Mr. Addison was, to be sure, a great man : his learning was not profound ; but his morality, his humour, and his elegance of writing, set him very high."

" Addison wrote Budgell's papers in the Spectator, at least mended them so much, that he made them almost his own ; and Draper, Tonson's partner, assured Mrs. Johnson, that the much admired epilogue to the Distressed Mother, which came out in Budgell's name, was in reality written by Addison."

He recommended Dr. Cheyne's books. Boswell said, he thought Cheyne had been reckoned whimsical. JOHNSON. " So he was in some things ; but there is no end of objections. There are few books to which some objection or other may not be made." He added, " I would not have you read any thing else of Cheyne, but his book on Health, and his English Malady."

Fielding being mentioned, Johnson exclaimed, " He was a blockhead : " and, upon Boswell's ex-

pressing his astonishment at so strange an assertion, he said, "What I mean by being a blockhead is, that he was a barren rascal." BOSWELL. "Will you not allow, sir, that he draws very natural pictures of human life?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, it is of very low life. Richardson used to say, that had he not known who Fielding was, he should have believed he was an ostler. Sir, there is more knowledge of the heart in one letter of Richardson's, than in all Tom Jones.\* I, indeed, never read Joseph Andrews." ERSKINE. "Surely, sir, Richardson is very tedious." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted, that you would hang yourself: but, you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment."

A book of travels, lately published under the title of *Coriat Junior*, and written by Mr. Paterson, was mentioned. Johnson said, this book was in imitation of Sterne, and not of Coriat, whose name Paterson had chosen as a whimsical one. "Tom Coriat," said he, "was a humourist about the court of James the First. He had a mixture of learning, of wit, and of buffoonery. He first travelled through Europe, and published his travels: he afterwards travelled on foot through Asia, and had made many

\* "Johnson's severity against Fielding did not arise from any viciousness in his style, but from his loose life, and the profligacy of almost all his male characters. Who would venture to read one of his novels aloud to modest women? His novels are *male* amusements, and very amusing they certainly are. Fielding's conversation was coarse, and so tinctured with the rank weeds of *the Garden*, that it would now be thought only fit for a brothel."—Burney.

remarks ; but he died at Mandoa, and his remarks were lost."

Talking of the Irish clergy, he said, " Swift was a man of great parts, and the instrument of much good to his country ; Berkeley was a profound scholar, as well as a man of fine imagination ; but Usher was the great luminary of the Irish church ; and a greater no church could boast of, at least, in modern times."

Speaking of Mr. Harte, canon of Windsor, and writer of the History of Gustavus Adolphus, he much commended him as a scholar, and a man of the most companionable talents he had ever known. He said, the defects in his history proceeded not from imbecillity, but from foppery.

He loved, he said, the old black letter books ; they were rich in matter, though their style was inelegant ; wonderfully so, considering how conversant the writers were with the best models of antiquity.

Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, he said, was the only book that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise.

He frequently exhorted Dr. Maxwell to set about writing a history of Ireland, and archly remarked, there had been some good Irish writers, and that one Irishman might at least aspire to be equal to another.

Of Dr. John Campbell, the author, he said, " He is a very inquisitive and a very able man, and a man of good religious principles, though I am afraid he has been deficient in practice. Campbell is radically right ; and we may hope that in time there will be good practice."

He owned, that he thought Hawkesworth was one of his imitators, but he did not think Goldsmith was. "Goldsmith," he said, "has great merit." BOSWELL. "But, sir, he is much indebted to you for his getting so high in the public estimation." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, he has, perhaps, got *sooner* to it by his intimacy with me."

### No. III.

### POETRY.

OF making verses, Johnson observed, "The great difficulty is to know when you have made good ones. When composing, I have generally had them in my mind, perhaps fifty at a time, walking up and down in my room; and then I have written them down, and often, from laziness, have written only half lines. I have written a hundred lines in a day. I remember, I wrote a hundred lines of the *Vanity of Human Wishes* in a day. Doctor, (turning to Goldsmith,) I am not quite idle; I made one line t'other day, but I made no more." GOLDSMITH. "Let us hear it; we'll put a bad one to it." JOHNSON. "No, sir, I have forgot it."

He said, "I have not been troubled for a long time with authors desiring my opinion of their works. I used once to be sadly plagued with a man who wrote verses, but who literally had no other notion of a verse but that it consisted of ten syllables. *Lay your knife and your fork across your plate*, was to him a verse :

*Lay your knife and your fork across your plate.*

As he wrote a great number of verses, he sometimes by chance made good ones, though he did not know it."

He was no admirer of blank verse, and said, "it always fails, unless sustained by the dignity of the subject. In blank verse, the language suffers more distortion, to keep it out of prose, than any inconvenience or limitation to be apprehended from the shackles and circumspection of rhyme."

Lady Miller's collection of verses by fashionable people, which were put into her vase at Batheaston villa, near Bath, in competition for honorary prizes, being mentioned, he held them very cheap: "*Bouts rimés*," said he, "is a mere conceit, and an *old* conceit *now*; I wonder how people were persuaded to write in that manner for this lady." Boswell named a gentleman of his acquaintance, who wrote for the vase. JOHNSON. "He was a blockhead for his pains." BOSWELL. "The duchess of Northumberland wrote." JOHNSON. "Sir, the duchess of Northumberland may do what she pleases; nobody will say any thing to a lady of her high rank: but, I should be apt to throw \*\*\*\*\*'s verses in his face."

Mr. Murphy mentioned Dr. Johnson's having a design to publish an edition of Cowley. Johnson said, he did not know but he should; and he expressed his disapprobation of Dr. Hurd, for having published a mutilated edition under the title of *Select Works of Abraham Cowley*. Mr. Murphy thought it a bad precedent; observing, that any author might be used in the same manner; and that it was pleasing to see the variety of an author's compositions at different periods.



On a subsequent occasion, he said, "I was angry with Hurd about Cowley, for having published a selection of his works; but, upon better consideration, I think there is no impropriety in a man's publishing as much as he chooses of any author, if he does not put the rest out of the way. A man, for instance, may print the odes of Horace alone." He now seemed to be in a more indulgent humour than when this subject was discussed between him and Mr. Murphy.

Johnson one day gave high praise to Dr. Bentley's verses in Dodsley's collection, which he recited with his usual energy. Dr. Adam Smith, who was present, observed, in his decisive professorial manner, "Very well—very well." JOHNSON. "Yes, they *are* very well, sir; but you may observe in what manner they are well. They are the forcible verses of a man of a strong mind, but not accustomed to write verse; for there is some uncouthness in the expression."

Boswell related a dispute between Goldsmith and Mr. Robert Dodsley, one day when they and he were dining at Tom Davies's, in 1762. Goldsmith asserted, that there was no poetry produced in this age. Dodsley appealed to his own Collection, and maintained, that though you could not find a palace like Dryden's Ode on St. Cecilia's Day, you had villages composed of very pretty houses; and he mentioned particularly, *The Spleen*." JOHNSON. "I think Dodsley gave up the question. He and Goldsmith said the same thing; only he said it in a softer manner than Goldsmith did; for he acknowledged that there was no poetry, nothing that towered above the common mark. You may find wit

and humour in verse, and yet no poetry. Hudibras has a profusion of these ; yet it is not to be reckoned a poem. The Spleen, in Dodsley's collection, on which you say he chiefly rested, is not poetry."

BOSWELL. " Does not Gray's poetry, sir, tower above the common mark ?" JOHNSON. " Yes, sir ;

but we must attend to the difference between what men in general cannot do if they would, and what every man may do if he would. Sixteen-string Jack towered above the common mark." BOSWELL.

" Then, sir, what is poetry ?" JOHNSON. " Why, sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all *know* what light is, but it is not easy to *tell* what it is."

#### No. IV.

#### POETS.

BOSWELL. " You have read Cibber's Apology, sir ?"

JOHNSON. " Yes, it is very entertaining ; but, as for Cibber himself, taking from his conversation all that he ought not to have said, he was a poor creature. I remember, when he brought me one of his odes, to have my opinion of it, I could not bear such nonsense, and would not let him read it to the end ; so little respect had I for *that great man* ! (laughing.) Yet, I remember Richardson wondering that I could treat him with familiarity."

Another time : " Colley Cibber, sir, was by no means a blockhead ; but, by arrogating to himself too much, he was in danger of losing that degree

of estimation to which he was entitled. His friends gave out that he *intended* his Birth-day Odes should be bad ; but that was not the case, sir ; for he kept them many months by him, and, a few years before he died, he showed me one of them, with great solicitude to render it as perfect as might be ; and I made some corrections, to which he was not very willing to submit. I remember the following couplet, in allusion to the king and himself :

Perch'd on the eagle's soaring wing,  
The lowly linnet loves to sing.

Sir, he had heard something of the fabulous tale of the wren sitting upon the eagle's wing, and he had applied it to a linnet. Cibber's familiar style, however, was better than that which Whitehead has assumed. *Grand* nonsense is insupportable. Whitehead is but a little man to inscribe verses to players.

" Sir, I do not think Gray a first-rate poet. He has not a bold imagination, nor much command of words. The obscurity in which he has involved himself will not persuade us that he is sublime. His Elegy in a Church-Yard has a happy selection of images, but I don't like what are called his great things. His ode, which begins

Ruin seize thee, ruthless king!  
Confusion on thy banners wait !

has been celebrated for its abruptness, and plunging into the subject all at once. But such arts as these have no merit, unless when they are original. We admire them only once ; and this abruptness.

has nothing new in it : nay, we have it in the old song of Johnny Armstrong :

Is there ever a man in all Scotland,  
From the highest estate to the lowest degree, &c.

And then, sir,

Yes, there is a man in Westmoreland,  
And Johnny Armstrong they do him call.

There now, you plunge at once into the subject. You have no previous narration to lead you to it.— The two next lines in that ode are, I think, very good :

Though, fann'd by conquest's crimson wing,  
They mock the air with idle state."

Bonnell Thornton had just published a burlesque Ode on St. Cecilia's Day, adapted to the ancient British music, viz. the salt-box, the Jew's harp, the marrow-bones and cleaver, the humstrum or hurdy-gurdy, &c. Johnson praised its humour, and seemed much diverted with it. He repeated the following passage :

.. In strains more exalted the salt-box shall join,  
And clattering, and battering, and clapping combine ;  
With a rap and a tap while the hollow side sounds,  
Up and down leaps the flap, and with rattling rebounds.\*

\* " In 1769, I set for Smart and Newbury, Thornton's burlesque Ode on St. Cecilia's day. It was performed at Ranelagh in masks, to a very crowded audience, as I was told ; for I then resided in Norfolk. Beard sung the salt-box song, which was admirably accompanied on that in-

He told Boswell he had often looked into the poems of a pretty voluminous writer, Mr. (now Dr.) John Ogilvie, one of the Presbyterian ministers of Scotland, which had lately come out, but could find no thinking in them. BOSWELL. "Is there not imagination in them, sir? JOHNSON. "Why, sir, there is in them what *was* imagination; but it is no more imagination in *him*, than sound is sound in the echo: and his diction too is not his own. We have long ago seen *white-robed innocence*, and *flower-be-spangled meads*."

He said: "Thomson, I think, had as much of the poet about him as most writers. Every thing appeared to him through the medium of his favourite pursuit. He could not have viewed those two candles burning but with a poetical eye."

Another time: "Thomson had a true poetical genius, the power of viewing every thing in a poetical light. His fault is such a cloud of words sometimes, that the sense can hardly peep through."

Buchanan, he said, was a very fine poet; and observed, that he was the first who complimented a lady, by ascribing to her the different perfections of the heathen goddesses; but that Johnston improved upon this, by making his lady at the same time free from their defects. He dwelt upon Buchanan's elegant verses to Mary queen of Scots,

strument by Brent, the fencing-master, and father of Miss Brent, the celebrated singer; Skeggs on the broomstick, as bassoon; and a remarkable performer on the Jew's-harp.—'Buzzing twangs the iron lyre.' Cleavers were cast in bell-metal for this entertainment. All the performers of the old woman's oratory, employed by Foote, were, I believe, employed at Ranelagh on this occasion."—*Burney*.

*Nymphæ Caledoniæ*, &c. and spoke with enthusiasm of the beauty of Latin verse. "All the languages," said he, "cannot furnish so melodious a line as—

*Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas."*

"Buchanan," he observed, has fewer *centos* than any modern Latin poet. He not only had great knowledge of the Latin language, but was a great poetical genius. Both the Scaligers praise him."

Boswell told him, that Voltaire, in a conversation with him, had distinguished Pope and Dryden thus:—"Pope drives a handsome chariot, with a couple of neat trim nags; Dryden a coach, and six stately horses." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, the truth is, they both drive coaches and six; but Dryden's horses are either galloping or stumbling; Pope's go at a steady even trot." He said of Goldsmith's *Traveller*, which had been published in Boswell's absence, "There has not been so fine a poem since Pope's time."

After dinner, where the conversation first turned upon Pope—Johnson said, his characters of men were admirably drawn; those of women, not so well. He repeated, in his forcible melodious manner, the concluding lines of the *Dunciad*. While he was talking loudly in praise of these lines, one of the company ventured to say, "Too fine for such a poem:—a poem on what?" JOHNSON. (with a disdainful look,) "Why, on *dunces*. It was worth while being a dunce then. Ah, sir, hadst *thou* lived in those days!—It is not worth while being a dunce now, when there are no wits." Bickerstaff ob-

served, as a peculiar circumstance, that Pope's fame was higher when he was alive, than it was then. Johnson said, his pastorals were poor things, though the versification was fine. He told us, with high satisfaction, the anecdote of Pope's inquiring who was the author of his London, and saying—he will be soon *déterré*. He observed, that in Dryden's poetry there were passages drawn from a profundity which Pope could never reach. He repeated some fine lines on love, by the former, and gave great applause to the character of Zimri. Goldsmith said, that Pope's character of Addison showed a deep knowledge of the human heart. Johnson said, that the description of the temple, in *The Mourning Bride*,\* was the finest poetical passage he had ever read; he recollected none in Shakspeare equal to it. —“But,” said Garrick, all alarmed for ‘the god of his idolatry,’ “we know not the extent and variety of his powers. We are to suppose there are such passages in his works. Shakspeare must not suffer from the badness of our memories.” Johnson, diverted by this enthusiastic jealousy, went on with great ardour, “No, sir, Congreve has *nature* ;” (smiling on the tragic eagerness of Garrick ; ) but, composing himself, he added, “Sir, this is not comparing Congreve on the whole with Shakspeare on the whole ; but only maintaining, that Congreve has one finer passage than any that can be found in Shakspeare. Sir, a man may have no more than ten guineas in the world, but he may have those ten guineas in one piece ; and so may have a finer piece than a man who has ten thousand pounds : but then he has only

\* Act ii. sc. 3.—*Malone*.

one ten-guinea piece. What I mean is, that you can show me no passage where there is simply a description of material objects, without any intermixture of moral notions, which produces such an effect." Mr. Murphy mentioned Shakspeare's description of the night before the battle of Agincourt; but it was observed, it had *men* in it. Mr. Davies suggested the speech of Juliet, in which she figures herself awaking in the tomb of her ancestors. Some one mentioned the description of Dover cliff. JOHNSON. "No, sir, it should be all precipice—all vacuum. The crows impede your fall. The diminished appearance of the boats, and other circumstances, are all very good description, but do not impress the mind at once with the horrible idea of immense height. The impression is divided; you pass on, by computation, from one stage of the tremendous space to another. Had the girl in *The Mourning Bride*, said, she could not cast her shoe to the top of one of the pillars in the temple, it would not have aided the idea, but weakened it."

Another time, he talked of the passage in *Congrave* with high commendation, and said, "Shakspeare never has six lines together without a fault. Perhaps, you may find seven; but this does not refute my general assertion. If I come to an orchard, and say there's no fruit here, and then comes a poring man, who finds two apples and three pears, and tells me, 'Sir, you are mistaken, I have found both apples and pears,' I should laugh at him. What would that be to the purpose?"

BOSWELL. "What do you think of Dr. Young's *Night Thoughts*, sir?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, there are many fine things in them."



One Sunday, Boswell dined with him at Mr. Hoole's. They talked of Pope. JOHNSON. "He wrote his *Dunciad* for fame; that was his primary motive. Had it not been for that, the dunces might have railed against him till they were weary, without his troubling himself about them. He delighted to vex them, no doubt; but he had more delight in seeing how well he could vex them."

The Odes to Obscurity and Oblivion, in ridicule of "cool Mason, and warm Gray," being mentioned, Johnson said, "They are Colman's best things." Upon its being observed, that it was believed these odes were made by Colman and Lloyd jointly;—JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, how can two people make an ode? Perhaps, one made one of them, and one the other." Boswell observed, that two people had made a play, and quoted the anecdote of Beaumont and Fletcher, who were brought under suspicion of treason, because, while concerting the plan of a tragedy when sitting together at a tavern, one of them was overheard saying to the other, "I'll kill the king." JOHNSON. "The first of these odes is the best; but they are both good. They exposed a very bad kind of writing." BOSWELL. "Surely, sir, Mr. Mason's *Elfrida* is a fine poem: at least, you will allow there are some good passages in it." JOHNSON. "There are now and then some good imitations of Milton's bad manner."

Mrs. Thrale disputed with him on the merit of Prior. He attacked him powerfully; said he wrote of love like a man who had never felt it: his love verses were college verses; and he repeated the song "Alexis shunn'd his fellow swains," &c. in so ludicrous a manner, as to make us all wonder how any

one could have been pleased with such fantastical stuff. Mrs. Thrale stood to her gun with great courage, in defence of amorous ditties, which Johnson despised, till he at last silenced her by saying, "My dear lady, talk no more of this : nonsense can be defended but by nonsense."

Mrs. Thrale then praised Garrick's talents for light gay poetry; and, as a specimen, repeated his song in Florizel and Perdita, and dwelt with peculiar pleasure on this line :

I'd smile with the simple, and feed with the poor.

JOHNSON. "Nay, my dear lady, this will never do. Poor David ! Smile with the simple ;—what folly is that ! And who would feed with the poor, that can help it ? No, no ; let me smile with the wise, and feed with the rich." Boswell repeated this sally to Garrick, and wondered to find his sensibility as a writer not a little irritated by it. To soothe him, he observed, that Johnson spared nobody ; and quoted the passage in Horace, in which he compares one who attacks his friends for the sake of a laugh, to a pushing ox, that is marked by a bunch of hay put upon his horns : *sternum habet in cornu*. "Ay," said Garrick vehemently, "he has a whole *mow* of it."

Speaking of Homer, whom he venerated as the prince of poets, Johnson remarked, that the advice given to Glaucus by his father, when he sent him to the Trojan war, was the noblest exhortation that could be instanced in any heathen writer, and comprised in a single line :

*Αἶψα ἀριστεύειν, καὶ ὑπερβόην σφύρασαι ;*

which is translated by Dr. Clarke thus :—" *Ut semper fortissime rem gererem, et superior virtute essem aliis.*"

A proposition which had been agitated, that monuments to eminent persons should, for the time to come, be erected in St. Paul's church as well as in Westminster-abbey, was mentioned ; and it was asked, who should be honoured by having his monument first erected there. Somebody suggested Pope. JOHNSON. " Why, sir, as Pope was a Roman Catholic, I would not have his to be first. I think, Milton's rather should have the precedence. I think more highly of him now than I did at twenty. There is more thinking in him and in Butler, than in any of our poets."

He spoke slightly of Dyer's Fleece.—" The subject, sir, cannot be made poetical. How can a man write poetically of serges and druggets ? Yet you will hear many people talk to you gravely of that *excellent* poem, The Fleece." Having talked of Grainger's Sugar Cane, Boswell mentioned to him Mr. Langton's having told him that this poem, being read in manuscript at sir Joshua Reynolds's, had made all the assembled wits burst into a laugh, when, after much blank verse pomp, the poet began a new paragraph thus :

Now, Muse, let's sing of rats.

And what increased the ridicule was, that one of the company, who slyly overlooked the reader, perceived that the word had been originally *mice*, and had been altered to *rats*, as more dignified.\*

\* Such is this little laughable incident, which has been often related, Dr. Percy, the bishop of Dromore, who was

This passage does not appear in the printed work; Dr. Grainger, or some of his friends, it should seem, having become sensible that introducing even *rats*, in a grave poem, might be liable to banter. He however, could not bring himself to relinquish the idea; for they are thus periphrastically exhibited in his poem, as it now stands :

Nor with less waste the whisker'd vermin race,  
A countless clan, despoil the lowland cane.

Johnson said, that Dr. Grainger was an agreeable man; a man who would do any good that was in his power. His translation of Tibullus, he thought, was very well done; but *The Sugar Cane*, a poem,

an intimate friend of Dr. Grainger, and has a particular regard for his memory, gave the following explanation :

“ The passage in question was originally not liable to such a perversion : for the author, having occasion in that part of his work to mention the havoc made by rats and mice, had introduced the subject in a kind of mock heroic, and a parody of Homer's *Battle of the Frogs and Mice*, invoking the Muse of the old Grecian bard, in an elegant and well turned manner. In this state I had seen it; but afterwards, unknown to me and other friends, he had been persuaded, contrary to his own better judgment, to alter it, so as to produce the unlucky effect above mentioned.”

The above was written by the bishop when he had not the poem itself to recur to : and though the account given was true of it at one period, yet, as Dr. Grainger afterwards altered the passage in question, the remarks in the text do not now apply to the printed poem.

The bishop gives this character of Dr. Grainger :—“ He was not only a man of genius and learning, but had many excellent virtues; being one of the most generous, friendly, and benevolent men I ever knew.”

did not please him ;\* for he exclaimed, " What could he make of a sugar-cane ? One might as well write the Parsley-bed, a poem ; or, the Cabbage-garden, a poem." BOSWELL. " You must then *pickle* your cabbage with the *sal Atticum*." JOHNSON. " You know there is already the Hop-Garden, a poem ; and, I think, one could say a great deal about cabbage. The poem might begin with the advantages of civilised society over a rude state, exemplified by the Scotch, who had no cabbages till Oliver Cromwell's soldiers introduced them ; and one might thus show how arts are propagated by conquest, as they were by the Roman arms."

Sir Joshua Reynolds mentioned Mr. Cumberland's Odes, which were just published. JOHNSON. " Why, sir, they would have been thought as good as odes commonly are, if Cumberland had not put his name to them ; but a name immediately draws censure, unless it be a name that bears down every thing before it. Nay, Cumberland has made his odes subsidiary to the fame of another man. They might have run well enough by themselves ; but he has not only loaded them with a name, but has made them carry double."

Johnson said of Chatterton, " This is the most extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge. It is wonderful how the whelp has written such things."

\* Dr. Johnson said to Boswell, " Percy, sir, was angry with me for laughing at the Sugar-cane ; for he had a mind to make a great thing of Grainger's rats."

No. V.

DRAMA.

THE Beggar's Opera, and the common question, whether it was pernicious in its effects, having been introduced in conversation;—JOHNSON. "As to this matter, which has been very much contested, I myself am of opinion, that more influence has been ascribed to The Beggar's Opera, than it, in reality, ever had; for, I do not believe, that any man was ever made a rogue by being present at its representation. At the same time, I do not deny, that it may have some influence, by making the character of a rogue familiar, and in some degree pleasing."\* Then, collecting himself, as it were, to give a heavy stroke—"There is in it such a *labefaction* of all principles, as may be injurious to morality."

While he pronounced this response, the company sat in a comical sort of restraint, smothering a laugh

\* A very eminent physician, whose discernment is as acute and penetrating in judging of the human character as it is in his own profession, remarked once at a club, that a lively young man, fond of pleasure, and without money, would hardly resist a solicitation from his mistress to go upon the highway, immediately after being present at the representation of the Beggar's Opera. It was observed by Mr. Gibbon, "that the Beggar's Opera may, perhaps, have sometimes increased the number of highwaymen; but it has had a beneficial effect in refining that class of men, making them less ferocious, more polite; in short, more like gentlemen." Upon this, Mr. Courtenay said, that "Gay was the Orpheus of highwaymen."

which they were afraid might burst out. In his life of Gay, he has been still more decisive as to the inefficiency of the Beggar's Opera in corrupting society. Yet, the gaiety and heroism of Macheath are very captivating to a youthful imagination; while the arguments for adventurous depredation are so plausible, the allusions so lively, and the contrasts with the ordinary and more painful modes of acquiring property are so artfully displayed, that it requires a cool and strong judgment to resist so imposing an aggregate. Still there is in it so much of real London life, so much brilliant wit, and such a variety of airs, which, from early association of ideas, engage, soothe, and enliven the mind, that it will always give pleasure on the stage; and it contains so many sound, moral suggestions, that it may be found an improving, as well as agreeable companion in the closet.

The late "*worthy*" duke of Queensbury, as Thomson, in his Seasons, justly characterizes him, told Boswell, that when Gay showed him the Beggar's Opera, his grace's observation was, "This is a very odd thing, Gay; I am satisfied that it is either a very good thing or a very bad thing." It proved the former, beyond the warmest expectations of the author or his friends. Mr. Cambridge, however, mentioned, that there was good reason enough to doubt concerning its success. He was told by Quin, that during the first night of its appearance it was long in a very dubious state; that there was a disposition to damn it, and that it was saved by the song,

O, ponder well! be not severe!

the audience being much affected by the innocent looks of Polly, when she came to those two lines, which exhibit at once a painful and ridiculous image,

For on the rope that hangs my dear,  
Depends poor Polly's life.

Quin himself had so bad an opinion of it, that he refused the part of Captain Macheath;\* and gave it to Walker, who acquired great celebrity by his grave, yet animated performance of it.

Boswell mentioned Mallet's tragedy of *Elvira*, which had been acted the preceding winter at Drury-lane, and that the honourable Andrew Erskine, Mr. Dempster, and self, had joined in writing a pamphlet entitled, *Critical Strictures*, against it; that the mildness of Dempster's disposition had, however, relented; and he had candidly said, "We have hardly a right to abuse this tragedy; for, bad as it is, how vain should either of us be, to write one not near as good!" JOHNSON. "Why, no, sir; this is not just reasoning. You *may* abuse a tragedy, though you cannot write one. You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables."

Boswell introduced Aristotle's doctrine in his Art of Poetry, of "the *καθαρσις των παθηματων*, the purging of the passions," as the purpose of tragedy. "But, how are the passions to be purged by terror and pity?" (said he, with an assumed air of ignorance, to incite Johnson to talk, for which it was

\* If this be fact, was it not because he was no singer?—*Ed.*



often necessary to employ some address.) JOHNSON. "Why, sir, you are to consider what is the meaning of purging in the original sense. It is to expel impurities from the human body. The mind is subject to the same imperfection. The passions are the great movers of human actions; but they are mixed with such impurities, that it is necessary they should be purged or refined, by means of terror and pity. For instance, ambition is a noble passion; but, by seeing upon the stage, that a man who is so excessively ambitious as to raise himself by injustice, is punished, we are terrified at the fatal consequences of such a passion. In the same manner, a certain degree of resentment is necessary; but if we see that a man carries it too far, we pity the object of it, and are taught to moderate that passion."

Boswell observed the great defect of the tragedy of Othello was, that it had not a moral; for that no man could resist the circumstances of suspicion which were artfully suggested to Othello's mind. JOHNSON. "In the first place, sir, we learn from Othello this very useful moral; not to make an unequal match: in the second place, we learn not to yield too readily to suspicion. The handkerchief is merely a trick, though a very pretty trick: but there are no other circumstances of reasonable suspicion, except what is related by Iago of Cassio's warm expressions concerning Desdemona in his sleep; and that depended entirely upon the assertion of one man. No, sir, I think Othello has more moral than almost any play."

When Garrick was vested with theatrical power by being manager of Drury-lane theatre, he kindly and generously made use of it to bring out Johnson's

tragedy, which had long been kept back for want of encouragement: but in this benevolent purpose he met with no small difficulty from the temper of Johnson, which could not brook that a drama, which he had formed with much study, and had been obliged to keep more than the nine years of Horace, should be revised and altered at the pleasure of an actor. Yet Garrick knew well, that without some alterations, it would not be fit for the stage. A violent dispute having ensued between them, Garrick applied to the reverend Dr. Taylor to interpose. Johnson was at first very obstinate. "Sir," said he, "the fellow wants me to make Mahomet run mad; that he may have an opportunity of tossing his hands, and kicking his heels." He was, however, at last, with difficulty, prevailed on to comply with Garrick's wishes, so as to allow of some changes; but still there were not enough.

When asked how he felt upon the ill success of his tragedy, he replied, "Like the Monument;" meaning that he continued firm and unmoved as that column. And let it be remembered, as an admonition to the *genus irritabile* of dramatic writers, that this great man, instead of peevishly complaining of the bad taste of the town, submitted to its decision without a murmur. He had indeed, upon all occasions, a great deference for the general opinion: "A man," said he, "who writes a book, thinks himself wiser or wittier than the rest of mankind; he supposes that he can instruct or amuse them; and the public, to whom he appeals, must, after all, be the judges of his pretensions."

BOSWELL. "Foote has a great deal of humour."  
JOHNSON. "Yes, sir." BOSWELL. "He has a sin-

gular talent of exhibiting character." JOHNSON. "Sir, it is not a talent, it is a vice; it is what others abstain from. It is not comedy, which exhibits the character of a species, as that of a miser gathered from many misers; it is farce, which exhibits individuals." BOSWELL. "Did not he think of exhibiting you, sir?" JOHNSON. "Sir, fear restrained him: he knew I would have broken his bones. I would have saved him the trouble of cutting off a leg; I would not have left him a leg to cut off." BOSWELL. "Pray, sir, is not Foote an infidel?" JOHNSON. "I do not know, sir, that the fellow is an infidel; but, if he be an infidel, he is an infidel as a dog is an infidel; that is to say, he has never thought upon the subject." BOSWELL. "I suppose, sir, he has thought superficially, and seized the first notions which occurred to his mind." JOHNSON. "Why then, sir, still he is like a dog, that snatches the piece next him. Did you never observe that dogs have not the power of comparing? A dog will take a small bit of meat as readily as a large, when both are before him."

Boswell found fault with Foote for indulging his talent of ridicule at the expense of his visitors, which he colloquially termed making fools of his company. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, when you go to see Foote, you do not go to see a saint: you go to see a man, who will be entertained at your house, and then bring you on a public stage; who will entertain you at his house for the purpose of bringing you on a public stage. Sir, he does not make fools of his company; they whom he exposes are fools already; he only brings them into action."

Speaking of Arthur Murphy, whom he very much loved, "I don't know," said he, "that Arthur can be classed with the very first dramatic writers; yet at present, I doubt much whether we have anything superior to Arthur."

It being mentioned, that Garrick assisted Dr. Brown, the author of *The Estimate*, in some dramatic composition; "No, sir;" said Johnson, "he would no more suffer Garrick to write a line in his play, than he would suffer him to mount his pulpit."

Dr. Goldsmith's new play, *She Stoops to Conquer*, being mentioned—JOHNSON. "I know of no comedy, for many years, that has so much exhilarated an audience—that has answered so much the great end of comedy—making an audience merry."

Goldsmith having said, that Garrick's compliment to the queen, which he introduced into the play of *The Chances*, which he had altered and revised this year, was mean and gross flattery—JOHNSON. "Why, sir, I would not *write*, I would not give solemnly under my hand, a character beyond what I thought really true; but a speech on the stage, let it flatter ever so extravagantly, is formular. It has always been formular to flatter kings and queens; so much so, that even in our church-service, we have 'our most religious king' used indiscriminately, whoever is king. Nay, they even flatter themselves:—'we have been graciously pleased to grant.'—No modern flattery, however, is so gross as that of the Augustan age, where the emperor was deified. '*Præsens Divus habebitur Augustus.*' And as to meanness, (rising into warmth,) how is it mean in a player,—a showman,—a fellow who exhibits himself for a shilling—to flatter his queen? The attempt, indeed, was dangerous; for if it had missed, what

became of Garrick, and what became of the queen? As sir William Temple says of a great general, it is necessary not only that his designs be formed in a masterly manner, but that they should be attended with success. Sir, it is right, at a time when the royal family is not generally liked, to let it be seen that the people like at least one of them."

Talking on prologue-writing, he observed, "Dryden has written prologues superior to any that David Garrick has written; but David Garrick has written more good prologues than Dryden has done. It is wonderful, that he has been able to write such variety of them."

Boswell observing that Garrick, who was about to quit the stage, would soon have an easier life.

JOHNSON. "I doubt that, sir." BOSWELL. "Why, sir, he will be Atlas with the burthen off his back."

JOHNSON. "But I know not, sir, if he will be so steady without his load. However, he should never play any more, but be entirely the gentleman, and not partly the player: he should no longer subject himself to be hissed by a mob, or to be insolently treated by performers, whom he used to rule with a high hand, and who would gladly retaliate."

BOSWELL. "I think he should play once a year for the benefit of decayed actors, as it has been said he means to do." JOHNSON. "Alas, sir! he will soon be a decayed actor himself."

Boswell mentioned his having introduced to Mr. Garrick count Neni, a Flemish nobleman of great rank and fortune, to whom Garrick talked of Abel Drugger as a *small part*; and related, with pleasant vanity, that a Frenchman, who had seen him in one of his low characters, exclaimed, "Comment! je ne le crois pas. Ce n'est pas Monsieur Garrick,

ce grand homme!" Garrick added, with an appearance of grave recollection, "If I were to begin life again, I think I should not play those low characters." Upon which Boswell observed, "Sir, you would be in the wrong; for your great excellence is your variety of playing—your representing so well characters so very different." JOHNSON. "Garrick, sir, was not in earnest in what he said; for, to be sure, his peculiar excellence is his variety; and perhaps there is not any one character, which has not been as well acted by somebody else, as he could do it." BOSWELL. "Why then, sir, did he talk so?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir to make you answer as you did." BOSWELL. "I don't know, sir; he seemed to dip deep into his mind for the reflection." JOHNSON. "He had not far to dip, sir; he had said the same thing, probably, twenty times before."

"Garrick," he observed, "does not play the part of Archer, in *The Beaux Stratagem*, well. The gentleman should break out through the footman, which is not the case as he does it."

Mrs. Pritchard being mentioned, he said, "Her playing was quite mechanical. It is wonderful how little mind she had. Sir, she had never read the tragedy of *Macbeth* all through. She no more thought of the play out of which her part was taken, than a shoemaker thinks of the skin, out of which he makes shoes."

He thus gave his opinion upon the merits of some of the principal performers, whom he remembered to have seen upon the stage. "Mrs. Porter, in the vehemence of rage, and Mrs. Clive, in the sprightliness of humour, I have never seen equalled."

What Clive did best, she did better than Garrick ; but she could not do half so many things well ; she was a better romp than any I ever saw in nature—Pritchard, in common life, was a vulgar idiot ; she would talk of her *gownnd* ; but, when she appeared upon the stage, seemed to be inspired by gentility and understanding. I once talked with Colley Cibber, and thought him ignorant of the principles of his art. Garrick, madam, was no declaimer : there was not one of his own scene-shifters who could not have spoken *To be, or not to be*, better than he did ; yet he was the only actor I ever saw, whom I could call a master both in tragedy and comedy ; though I liked him best in comedy. A true conception of character, and natural expression of it, were his distinguished excellences." Having expatiated, with his usual force and eloquence, on Mr. Garrick's extraordinary eminence as an actor, he concluded with this compliment to his social talents : " And after all, madam, I thought him less to be envied on the stage than at the head of a table."

Johnson, indeed, had thought more upon the subject of acting than might be generally supposed. Talking of it one day to Mr. Kemble, he said, " Are you, sir, one of those enthusiasts, who believe yourself transformed into the very character you represent ?" Upon Mr. Kemble's answering, that he had never felt so strong a persuasion himself : " To be sure not, sir," said Johnson ; " the thing is impossible. And if Garrick really believed himself to be that monster, Richard the Third, he deserved to be hanged every time he performed it."

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. " I do not perceive

why the profession of a player should be despised ; for the great and ultimate end of all the employments of mankind is to produce amusement. Garrick produces more amusement than any body."

BOSWELL. " You say, Dr. Johnson, that Garrick exhibits himself for a shilling : in this respect he is only on a footing with a lawyer, who exhibits himself for his fee, and even will maintain any nonsense or absurdity, if the case require it. Garrick refuses a play or a part which he does not like : a lawyer never refuses."

JOHNSON. " Why, sir, what does this prove ? only that a lawyer is worse. Boswell is now like Jack in *The Tale of a Tub*, who, when he is puzzled by an argument, hangs himself. He thinks I shall cut him down, but I'll let him hang." (laughing vociferously.)

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. " Mr. Boswell thinks, that the profession of a lawyer being unquestionably honourable, if he can show the profession of a player to be more honourable, he proves his argument."

## No. VI.

### HISTORY.

TALKING of history, Johnson said, " We may know historical facts to be true, as we may know facts in common life to be true. Motives are generally known. We cannot trust to the characters we find in history, unless when they are drawn by those who knew the persons ; as those, for instance, by Sallust and by lord Clarendon."

" Lord Hailes's *Annals of Scotland*," he re-



marked, "have not that painted form which is the taste of this age, but it is a book which will always sell; it has such a stability of dates, such a certainty of facts, and such a punctuality of citation. I never before read Scotch history with certainty."

"Great abilities," said he, "are not requisite for an historian; for in historical composition all the great powers of the human mind are quiescent. He has facts ready to his hand; so there is no exercise of invention. Imagination is not required in any high degree; only about as much as is used in the lower kinds of poetry. Some penetration, accuracy, and colouring, will fit a man for the task, if he can give the application which is necessary."

Mr. Kristrom, a Swede, who was tutor to some young gentleman in the city, told Boswell, that there was a very good History of Sweden, by Dantine. Having at that time an intention of writing a history of that country, Boswell asked Dr. Johnson, whether one might write a history of Sweden, without going thither. "Yes, sir," said he, "one for common use."

At a dinner party at general Paoli's, an animated debate took place, whether Martinelli should continue his History of England. JOHNSON. "No, sir, he would give great offence. He would have to tell of almost all the living great what they do not wish told." GOLDSMITH. "It may, perhaps, be necessary for a native to be more cautious; but a foreigner, who comes among us without prejudice, may be considered as holding the place of a judge, and may speak his mind freely." JOHNSON. "Sir, a foreigner, when he sends a work from the press, ought to be on his guard against catching the error

and mistaken enthusiasm of the people among whom he happens to be." GOLDSMITH. "Sir, he wants only to sell his history, and to tell truth; one an honest, the other a laudable motive." "JOHNSON. "Sir, they are both laudable motives. It is laudable in a man to wish to live by his labours; but he should write so as he may *live* by them, not so as he may be knocked on the head. I would advise him to be at Calais before he publishes his history of the present age. A foreigner, who attaches himself to a political party in this country, is in the worst state that can be imagined: he is looked upon as a mere intermeddler. A native may do it from interest." BOSWELL. "Or principle." GOLDSMITH. "There are people who tell a hundred political lies every day, and are not hurt by it. Surely, then, one may tell truth with safety." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, in the first place, he who tells a hundred lies has disarmed the force of his lies: but, besides, a man had rather have a hundred lies told of him, than one truth which he does not wish should be told." GOLDSMITH. "For my part, I'd tell truth, and shame the devil." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir; but the devil will be angry. I wish to shame the devil as much as you do, but I should choose to be out of the reach of his claws." GOLDSMITH. "His claws can do you no harm, when you have the shield of truth."

The common remark as to the utility of reading history being made: JOHNSON. "We must consider how very little history there is; I mean real authentic history. That certain kings reigned, and certain battles were fought, we can depend upon as

true; but all the colouring, all the philosophy of history, is conjecture." BOSWELL. "Then, sir, you would reduce all history to no better than an almanack, a mere chronological series of remarkable events." Mr. Gibbon, who must at that time have been employed upon his history, of which he published the first volume in the following year, was present; but did not step forth in defence of that species of writing. He probably did not like to *trust* himself with Johnson.\*

\* Boswell here alludes to a speech made by Gibbon on a former occasion. In a company where they were both present, the mention of the wolf had led Johnson to think of other wild beasts; and while sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr. Langton were carrying on a dialogue about something which engaged them earnestly, he, in the midst of it, broke out, "Pennant tells of bears." They went on; which he, being dull of hearing, did not perceive, or, if he did, was not willing to break off his talk; so he continued to vociferate his remarks, and *bear* ("like a word in a catch," as Beauclerk said) was repeatedly heard at intervals, which coming from him, who, by those who did not know him, had been so often assimilated to that ferocious animal, while those who were sitting around could hardly stifle laughter, produced a very ludicrous effect. Silence having ensued, he proceeded: "We are told, that the black bear is innocent; but I should not like to trust myself with him." Mr. Gibbon muttered, in a low tone of voice, "I should not like to trust myself with *you*."

## No. VII.

## NATURAL HISTORY.

THE custom of eating dogs at Otaheite being mentioned, Goldsmith observed, that this was also a custom in China; that a dog-butcher is as common there as any other butcher; and that when he walks abroad, all the dogs fall on him. JOHNSON.

"That is not owing to his killing dogs, sir. I remember a butcher at Lichfield, whom a dog that was in the house where I lived always attacked. It is the smell of carnage which provokes this, let the animals he has killed be what they may."

GOLDSMITH. "Yes, there is a general abhorrence in animals at the signs of massacre. If you put a tub full of blood into a stable the horses are like to go mad." JOHNSON. "I doubt that." GOLDSMITH.

"Nay, sir, it is a fact well authenticated." THRALE.

"You had better prove it before you put it into your book on natural history. You may do it in my stable if you will." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, I would

not have him prove it. If he is content to take his information from others, he may get through his book with little trouble, and without much endangering his reputation; but if he makes experiments for so comprehensive a book as his, there would be no end to them: his erroneous assertions would then fall upon himself; and he might be blamed for not having made experiments as to every particular."

Boswell related, that he had, several times, when

in Italy, seen the experiment of placing a scorpion within a circle of burning coals; that it ran round and round in extreme pain; and finding no way to escape, retired to the centre, and, like a true Stoic philosopher, darted its sting into its head, and thus at once freed itself from its woes. "This must end 'em." This, he observed, was a curious fact, as it showed deliberate suicide in a reptile. Johnson would not admit the fact. He said, Maupertuis was of opinion that it does not kill itself, but dies of the heat; that it gets to the centre of the circle as the coolest place; that its turning its tail in upon its head is merely in convulsion, and that it does not sting itself. He said he would be satisfied if the great anatomist Morgagni, after dissecting a scorpion, on which the experiment had been tried, should certify that its sting had penetrated into its head.

He seemed pleased to talk of natural philosophy. "That woodcocks," said he, "fly over the northern countries, is proved, because they have been observed at sea. Swallows certainly sleep all winter. A number of them conglobulate together, by flying round and round; and then, all in a heap, throw themselves under water, and lie in the bed of a river." He said, one of his first essays was a Latin poem upon the glow-worm.

Talking of birds, Boswell mentioned Mr. Daines Barrington's ingenious Essay against the received notion of their migration. JOHNSON. "I think we have as good evidence for the migration of woodcocks as can be desired. We find they disappear at a certain time of the year, and appear again at a certain time of the year; and some of them, when

weary in their flight, have been known to alight on the rigging of ships far out at sea." One of the company observed, that there had been instances of some of them found in summer in Essex. JOHNSON. "Sir, that strengthens our argument. *Exceptio probat regulam*. Some being found, shows, that, if all remained, many would be found. A few sick or lame ones may be found." GOLDSMITH. "There is a partial migration of the swallows: the stronger ones migrate; the others do not."

Johnson repeated an argument, which is found in his Rambler, against the notion that the brute creation is endowed with the faculty of reason. "Birds build by instinct; they never improve; they build their first nest as well as any one they ever build." GOLDSMITH. "Yet we see, if we take away a bird's nest with the eggs in it, she will make a slighter nest, and lay again." JOHNSON. "Sir, that is because at first she has full time, and makes her nest deliberately. In the case you mention, she is pressed to lay, and must therefore make her nest quickly; and consequently it will be slight." GOLDSMITH. "The nidification of birds is what is least known in natural history, though one of the most curious things in it."

Boswell told him, that he heard Dr. Percy was writing the history of the wolf in Great Britain. JOHNSON. "The wolf, sir; why the wolf? Why does he not write of the bear, which we had formerly? Nay, it is said we had the beaver. Or why does he not write of the gray rat, the Hanover rat, as it is called, because it is said to have come into this country about the time that the family of Hanover came? I should like to see 'The History

of the Gray Rat, by Thomas Percy, D.D. Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty.' " (laughing immoderately.) BOSWELL. " I am afraid a court chaplain could not decently write of the gray rat." JOHNSON. " Sir, he need not give it the name of the Hanover rat."

Mr. Seward mentioned the observations which he had made upon the strata of the earth in volcanoes, from which it appeared, that they were so very different in depth at different periods, that no calculation could be made as to the time required for their formation. This fully refuted an antemosaical remark introduced into captain Brydone's entertaining tour, from a kind of vanity, which is too common in those who have not sufficiently studied the most important of all subjects. Dr. Johnson, indeed, had said before, independent of this observation, " Shall all the accumulated evidence of the history of the world ; shall the authority of what is unquestionably the most ancient writing—be overturned by an uncertain remark such as this ?"

## No. VIII.

### BIOGRAPHY.

" JOHNSON recommended to me," says Boswell, " to keep a journal of my life, full and unreserved. He said it would be a very good exercise, and would yield me great satisfaction, when the particulars were faded from my remembrance. I was uncommonly fortunate in having had a previous

coincidence of opinion with him upon this subject, for I had kept such a journal for some time ; and it was no small pleasure to me to have this to tell him, and to receive his approbation. He counselled me to keep it private, and said, I might surely have a friend, who would burn it in case of my death. From this habit I have been enabled to give the world so many anecdotes, which would otherwise have been lost to posterity. I mentioned, that I was afraid I put into my journal too many little incidents. JOHNSON. ' There is nothing, sir, too little for so little a creature as man. It is by studying little things that we attain the great art of having as little misery and as much happiness as possible.'

" He told me, that he had, twelve or fourteen times, attempted to keep a journal of his life, but never could persevere. He advised me to do it, ' The great thing to be recorded,' said he, ' is the state of your own mind ; and you should write down every thing that you remember, for you cannot judge at first what is good or bad ; and write immediately, while the impression is fresh, for it will not be the same a week afterwards.' "

Boswell mentioned, that he had in his possession the Life of sir Robert Sibbald, the celebrated Scottish antiquary, and founder of the Royal College of Physicians at Edinburgh, in the original manuscript, in his own hand-writing ; and that it was, he believed, the most natural and candid account of himself that ever was given by any man. As an instance, he tells, that the duke of Perth, then chancellor of Scotland, pressed him very much to



come over to the Roman catholic faith: that he resisted all his grace's arguments for a considerable time, till one day he felt himself, as it were, instantaneously convinced, and with tears in his eyes ran into the duke's arms, and embraced the ancient religion; that he continued very steady in it for some time, and accompanied his grace to London one winter, and lived in his household; that there he found the rigid fasting prescribed by the church very severe upon him; that this disposed him to reconsider the controversy; and, having then seen that he was in the wrong, he returned to protestantism. Boswell talked of some time or other publishing this curious life. MRS. THRALE. "I think you had as well let alone that publication. To discover such weakness exposes a man when he is gone." JOHNSON. "Nay, it is an honest picture of human nature. How often are the primary motives of our greatest actions as small as Sibbald's, for his re-conversion?" MRS. THRALE. "But may they not as well be forgotten?" JOHNSON. "No, madam, a man loves to review his own mind. That is the use of a diary, or journal." LORD TRIMLESTOWN. "True, sir. As the ladies love to see themselves in a glass, so a man likes to see himself in his journal." BOSWELL. "A very pretty allusion." JOHNSON. "Yes, indeed." BOSWELL. "And as a lady adjusts her dress before a mirror, a man adjusts his character by looking at his journal." He adds, "I next year found the very same thought in Atterbury's Funeral Sermon on Lady Cutts; where having mentioned her Diary, he says, 'In this glass she every day dressed her

mind.' This is a proof of coincidence, and not of plagiarism; for I had never read that sermon before."

Johnson said, " Bayle's Dictionary is a very useful work for those to consult, who love the biographical part of literature, which is what I love most."

As he had objected to a part of one of his letters being published, Boswell thought it right to take an opportunity of asking him explicitly, whether it would be improper to publish his letters after his death. His answer was, " Nay, sir, when I am dead, you may do as you will."

He said, " Goldsmith's life of Parnel is poor: not that it is poorly written, but that he had poor materials; for nobody can write the life of a man, but those who have eat, and drank, and lived in social intercourse with him." Boswell said, if it was not troublesome, and presuming too much, he would request him to tell him all the little circumstances of his life; what schools he attended when he came to Oxford, when he came to London, &c. He did not disapprove of his curiosity as to these particulars; but said, " They'll come out by degrees, as we talk together."

He censured Ruffhead's Life of Pope; and remarked, that " he knew nothing of Pope, and nothing of poetry." He praised Dr. Joseph Warton's Essay on Pope; but added, he supposed we should have no more of it, as the author had not been able to persuade the world to think of Pope as he did. BOSWELL. " Why, sir, should that prevent him from continuing his work? He is an ingenious counsel, who has made the most of his cause:

he is not obliged to gain it." JOHNSON. "But, sir, there is a difference when the cause is of a man's own making."

At another time, he, Mr. Thomas Warton, and Boswell, talked of biography. JOHNSON. "It is rarely well executed. They only who live with a man can write his life with any genuine exactness and discrimination; and few people who have lived with a man know what to remark about him. The chaplain of a late bishop, whom I was to assist in writing some memoirs of his lordship, could tell me scarcely any thing." BOSWELL. "Mr. Robert Dodsley's life should be written, as he was so much connected with the wits of his time, and by his literary merit had raised himself from the station of a footman." WARTON. "He published a little volume under the title of *The Muse in Livery*." JOHNSON. "I doubt whether Dodsley's brother would thank a man who should write his life; yet Dodsley himself was not unwilling that his original low condition should be recollected. When lord Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead* came out, one of which is between Apicius, an ancient epicure, and Dartineuf, a modern epicure, Dodsley said to me, 'I knew Dartineuf well, for I was once his footman.'"

Biography led them to speak of Dr. John Campbell, who had written a considerable part of the *Biographia Britannica*. Johnson, though he valued him highly, was of opinion that there was not so much in his great work, *A Political Survey of Great Britain*, as the world had been taught to expect; and had said to Boswell, that he believed Campbell's disappointment, on account of the bad

success of that work, had killed him. He this evening observed of it, "That work was his death." Mr. Warton, not adverting to his meaning, answered, "I believe so, from the great attention he bestowed on it." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, he died of want of attention, if he died at all by that book."

Boswell said, "In writing a life, a man's peculiarities should be mentioned, because they mark his character." JOHNSON. "Sir, there is no doubt as to peculiarities: the question is, whether a man's vices should be mentioned; for instance, whether it should be mentioned, that Addison and Parnell drank too freely: for people will probably more easily indulge in drinking from knowing this; so that more ill may be done by the example, than good by telling the whole truth." On this, Boswell remarks, "Here was an instance of his varying from himself in talk; for when lord Hailes and he sat one morning calmly conversing, in my house at Edinburgh, I well remember that Dr. Johnson maintained, that 'if a man is to write *A Panegyric*, he may keep vices out of sight; but if he professes to write *A Life*, he must represent it really as it was;' and when I objected to the danger of telling that Parnell drank to excess, he said, that 'it would produce an instructive caution to avoid drinking, when it was seen, that even the learning and genius of Parnell could be debased by it.' And in the Hebrides, he maintained, as appears from my Journal, that a man's intimate friend should mention his faults, if he writes his life."

## No. IX.

## BONS MOTS.

WHEN Dr. Johnson had finished some part of his tragedy of Irene, he read what he had done to Mr. Walmsley, who objected to his having already brought his heroine into great distress; and asked him, "How can you possibly contrive to plunge her into deeper calamity?" Johnson, in sly allusion to the supposed oppressive proceedings of the court of which Mr. Walmsley was registrar, replied, "Sir, I can put her into the spiritual court!"

Soon after Edwards's *Canons of Criticism* came out, Johnson was dining at Tonson the bookseller's, with Hayman the painter, and some more company. Hayman related to sir Joshua Reynolds, that the conversation having turned upon Edwards's book, the gentlemen praised it much, and Johnson allowed its merit: but when they went farther, and appeared to put that author upon a level with Warburton, "Nay," said Johnson, "he has given him some smart hits to be sure; but there is no proportion between the two men; they must not be named together. A fly, sir, may sting a stately horse, and make him wince; but one is but an insect, and the other is a horse still."

On the 6th of March, 1754, came out lord Bolingbroke's works, published by Mr. David Mallet. Johnson, hearing of their tendency, was roused with a just indignation, and pronounced this me-

morale sentence upon the noble author and his editor: "Sir, he was a scoundrel, and a coward: a scoundrel, for charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality; a coward, because he had not resolution to fire it off himself, but left half a crown to a beggarly Scotchman, to draw the trigger after his death!"

"One day," says Boswell, "he read to us a dissertation which he was preparing for the press, entitled, *A History and Chronology of the Fabulous Ages*. Some old divinities of Thrace, related to the Titans, and called the *Cabiri*, made a very important part of the theory of this piece; and in a conversation afterwards, Mr. Wise talked much of his *Cabiri*. As we returned to Oxford in the evening, I out-walked Johnson, and he cried out, *Sufflamine*, a Latin word which came from his mouth with peculiar grace, and was as much as to say, *Put on your drag chain*. Before we got home, I again walked too fast for him; and he now cried out, 'Why you walk as if you were pursued by all the *Cabiri* in a body.'"

When the messenger, who carried the last sheet of Johnson's Dictionary to Millar, returned, Johnson asked him, "Well, what did he say?" "Sir," answered the messenger, "he said, 'thank God, I have done with him.'"

"I am glad," replied Johnson, with a smile, "that he thanks God for any thing."

At a gentleman's seat in the west of England, in order to amuse him till dinner should be ready, he was taken out to walk in the garden. The master of the house, thinking it proper to introduce some-

thing scientific into the conversation, addressed him thus : " Are you a botanist, Dr. Johnson ?" " No, sir," answered Johnson, " I am not a botanist ; and, (alluding, no doubt, to his near-sightedness) should I wish to become a botanist, I must first turn myself into a reptile."

When Mr. Davies first introduced Boswell to Johnson, he was much agitated ; and, recollecting his prejudice against the Scotch, of which he had heard much, said to Davies, " Don't tell where I come from." " From Scotland," cried Davies, roguishly. " Mr. Johnson," said Boswell, " I do indeed come from Scotland, but I can't help it." To which Johnson replied, " That, sir, I find is what a great many of your countrymen cannot help."

Mr. Ogilvie was unlucky enough to choose for the topic of his conversation the praises of his native country. He began with saying, that there was very rich land around Edinburgh. Goldsmith, who had studied physic there, contradicted this very untruly, with a sneering laugh. Disconcerted a little by this, Mr. Ogilvie then took a new ground, where he probably thought himself perfectly safe ; for he observed, that Scotland had a great many noble wild prospects. JOHNSON. " I believe, sir, you have a great many : Norway, too, has noble wild prospects ; and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects : but, sir, let me tell you, the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England."

Johnson said he had lately been a long while at Lichfield, but had grown very weary before he left it. BOSWELL. " I wonder at that, sir ; it is your

native place." JOHNSON. "Why, so is Scotland *your* native place."

An essay, written by Mr. Deane, a divine of the church of England, maintaining the future life of brutes, by an explication of certain parts of the Scriptures, was mentioned, and the doctrine insisted on by a gentleman, who seemed fond of curious speculation. Johnson, who did not like to hear of any thing concerning a future state, which was not authorized by the regular canons of orthodoxy, discouraged this talk; and being offended at its continuation, he watched an opportunity to give the gentleman a blow of reprehension. So, when the poor speculatist, with a serious metaphysical pensive face, addressed him, "But really, sir, when we see a very sensible dog, we don't know what to think of him,"—Johnson, rolling with joy at the thought which beamed in his eye, turned quickly round, and replied, "True, sir; and when we see a very foolish *fellow*, we don't know what to think of *him*." He then rose up, strode to the fire, and stood for some time laughing and exulting.

"The late Alexander, earl of Eglington," says Boswell, "who loved wit more than wine, and men of genius more than sycophants, had a great admiration of Johnson; but, from the remarkable elegance of his own manners, was, perhaps, too delicately sensible of the roughness which sometimes appeared in Johnson's behaviour. One evening, when his lordship did me the honour to sup at my lodgings, with Dr. Robertson, and several other men of literary distinction, he regretted that Johnson had not been educated with more refinement; and



lived more in polished society. 'No, no, my lord,' said signor Baretto, 'do with him what you would, he would always have been a bear.' 'True,' answered the earl, with a smile, 'but he would have been a *dancing bear*.'

"To obviate all the reflections which have gone round to Johnson's prejudice, by applying to him the epithet of *bear*, let me impress upon my readers a just and happy saying of my friend Goldsmith, who knew him well: 'Johnson, to be sure, has a roughness in his manner, but no man alive has a more tender heart: *he has nothing of the bear but his skin*.'"

Goldsmith, to divert the tedious minutes, while waiting for one of the guests at a dinner-party, strutted about, bragging of his dress, and appeared seriously vain of it (for his mind was wonderfully prone to such expressions): "Come, come," said Garrick, "talk no more of that: you are, perhaps, the worst—eh, eh!" Goldsmith was eagerly attempting to interrupt him, when Garrick went on, laughing ironically, "Nay, you will always *look* like a gentleman; but I am talking of being well or *ill dressed*." "Well, let me tell you," said Goldsmith, "when my tailor brought home my blossom-coloured coat, he said, 'Sir, I have a favour to beg of you:—when any body asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to mention John Filby, at the Harrow, in Water-lane.'"  
JOHNSON. "Why, sir, that was because he knew the strange colour would attract crowds to gaze at it, and thus they might hear of him, and see how well he could make a coat even of so absurd a colour."

One day, at sir Joshua's table, when it was related, that Mrs. Montague, in an excess of compliment to the author of a modern tragedy, had exclaimed, "I tremble for Shakspeare;" Johnson said, "When Shakspeare has got \*\*\*\*\* for his rival, and Mrs. Montague for his defender, he is in a poor state indeed."

Speaking of Mr. Hanway, who published *An Eight Days' Journey from London to Portsmouth*, "Jonas," said he, "acquired some reputation by travelling abroad, but lost it all by travelling at home."

Somebody observing that the Scotch Highlanders, in the year 1745, had made surprising efforts, considering their numerous wants and disadvantages—"Yes, sir," said he, "their wants were numerous; but you have not mentioned the greatest of them all—the want of law."

Being asked by a young nobleman, what was become of the gallantry and military spirit of the old English nobility, he replied, "Why, my lord, I'll tell you what is become of it: it is gone into the city to look for a fortune."

Speaking of a dull tiresome fellow, whom he chanced to meet, he said, "That fellow seems to me to possess but one idea, and that is a wrong one."

A gentleman, having to some of the usual arguments for drinking, added this: "You know, sir, drinking drives away care, and makes us forget whatever is disagreeable: would not you allow a man to drink for that reason?" JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, if he sat next *you*."

JOHNSON. "I remember once being with Gold-

smith in Westminster abbey. While we surveyed the Poets' Corner, I said to him, from Ovid,

*Forſitan et noſtrum nomen miſcebitur iſtis.*

When we got to Temple-bar, he ſtopped me, pointed to the heads upon it, and ſlyly whiſpered me,

*Forſitan et noſtrum nomen miſcebitur iſtis.\**

“At the *Literary Club*,” ſays Boswell, “before Johnson came in, we talked of his Journey to the Western Iſlands, and of his coming away ‘willing to believe the ſecond ſight,’ which ſeemed to excite ſome ridicule. I was then ſo impreſſed with the truth of many of the ſtories which I had been told, that I avowed my conviction, ſaying, ‘He is only *willing* to believe—I *do* believe: the evidence is enough for me, though not for his great mind. What will not fill a quart bottle will fill a pint bottle: I am filled with belief.’ ‘Are you?’ ſaid Colman; ‘then cork it up.’”

Johnson having gone to Mrs. Abington’s benefit, at ſupper, one of the company attempted, with too much forwardneſs, to rally him on his late appearance at the theatre; but had reaſon to repent of his temerity. “Why, ſir, did you go to Mrs. Abington’s benefit? Did you ſee?” JOHNSON. “No, ſir.” “Did you hear?” JOHNSON. “No, ſir.” “Why then, ſir, did you go?” JOHNSON. “Be cauſe, ſir, ſhe is a favourite of the public;

\* In alluſion to Johnson’s political principles, and perhaps his own,

and when the public cares the thousandth part for you that it does for her, I will go to your benefit too."

Dr. Burney having remarked, that Mr. Garrick was beginning to look old, Johnson said, "Why, sir, you are not to wonder at that; no man's face has had more wear and tear."

Johnson censured Gwyn for taking down a church, which might have stood many years, and building a new one at a different place, for no other reason, but that there might be a direct road to a new bridge; and his expression was, "You are taking a church out of the way, that the people may go in a straight line to the bridge." GWYN. "No, sir; I am putting the church *in the way*, that the people may not go *out of the way*." JOHNSON (with a hearty loud laugh of approbation.) "Speak no more: rest your colloquial fame upon this."

Being by no means pleased with their inn at Bristol, Boswell said, "Let us see now how we should describe it." Johnson was ready with his raillery. "Describe it, sir? Why, it was so bad, that Boswell wished to be in Scotland!"

In the autumn of 1783, he received a visit from the celebrated Mrs. Siddons. When she came into the room, there happened to be no chair ready for her, which he observing, said, with a smile, "Madam, you, who so often occasion a want of seats to other people, will the more easily excuse the want of one yourself."

Dr. Johnson said to Miss Hannah More, who had expressed a wonder, that the poet who had written *Paradise Lost*, should write such poor sonnets:

"Milton, madam, was a genius, that could cut a Colossus from a rock, but could not carve heads upon cherry-stones."

Boswell told him, that David Hume had made a short collection of Scotticisms. "I wonder," said Johnson, "that he should find them."

## No. X.

## BULLS.

THERE had been an execution of two or three criminals at Oxford on a Monday. Soon afterwards, one day at dinner, Boswell was saying, that Mr. Swinton, the chaplain of the gaol, and also a frequent preacher before the university, a learned man, but often thoughtless and absent, preached the condemnation-sermon on repentance, before the convicts, on the preceding day, Sunday; and in the close, he told his audience, that he should give them the remainder of what he had to say on the subject the next Lord's Day. Upon which, one of the company, a doctor of divinity, and a plain matter-of-fact man, by way of offering an apology for Mr. Swinton, gravely remarked, that he had probably preached the same sermon before the university. "Yes, sir," says Johnson, "but the university were not to be hanged the next morning."

Boswell mentioned, that Dr. Thomas Campbell had come from Ireland to London, principally to see Dr. Johnson: he seemed angry at this observation. DAVIES. "Why, sir, there came a man from Spain to see Livy, and Corelli came to England to

see Purcell,\* and when he heard he was dead, went directly back again to Italy." JOHNSON. "I should not wish to have been dead, to disappoint Campbell; but I should have wished to have been a hundred miles off." Boswell adds: "This was apparently perverse; and I do believe it was not his real way of thinking: he could not but like a man who came so far to see him. He laughed with some complacency, when I told him Campbell's odd expression to me concerning him, 'that having seen such a man, was a thing to talk of a century hence,' as if he could live so long."

Of the father of one of his friends, he observed, "He never clarified his notions by filtrating them through other minds: he had a canal upon his estate, where at one place the bank was too low—" "I dug the canal deeper," said he."

He once in his life was known himself to have uttered what is called a *bull*. Sir Joshua Reynolds, when they were riding together in Devonshire, complained, that he had a very bad horse, for that even when going down hill he moved slowly step by step. "Ay," said Johnson, "and when he goes up hill, he *stands still*."

\* Mr. Davies was here mistaken: Corelli never was in England.—Burney.

## No. XI.

## LANGUAGE.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS once asked Johnson by what means he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language. He told him, that he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion, and in every company: to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language he could put it into: and that by constant practice, and never suffering any careless expressions to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him.

When Johnson showed Boswell a proof-sheet of the character of Addison, in which he so highly extols his style, Boswell could not help observing, that it had not been his own model, as no two styles could differ more from each other. JOHNSON. "Sir, Addison had his style, and I have mine." When he ventured to ask him, whether the difference did not consist in this, that Addison's style was full of idioms, colloquial phrases, and proverbs; and his own more strictly grammatical; and free from such phraseology and modes of speech as can never be literally translated or understood by foreigners; he allowed the discrimination to be just.

Talking of Hume's style: JOHNSON. "Why, sir, his style is not English; the structure of his sen-

tences is French. Now the French structure and the English structure may, in the nature of things, be equally good : but if you allow that the English language is established, he is wrong. My name might originally have been Nicholson, as well as Johnson ; but were you to call me Nicholson now, you would call me very absurdly."

In 1769, Boswell presented Dr. Johnson to general Paoli. They met with a manly ease, mutually conscious of their own abilities. The general spoke Italian and Dr. Johnson English, and understood one another very well, with a little of interpretation from Boswell, in which he compared himself to an isthmus, which joins two great continents. Upon Johnson's approach, the general said, "From what I have read of your works, sir, and from what Mr. Boswell has told me of you, I have long held you in great veneration." The general talked of languages being formed on the particular notions and manners of a people, without knowing which, we cannot know the language. We may know the direct signification of single words ; but by these no beauty of expression, no sally of genius, no wit is conveyed to the mind. All this must be by allusion to other ideas. JOHNSON. "Sir, you talk of language, as if you had never done any thing else but study it, instead of governing a nation." PAOLI. "*Questo e un troppo gran complimento* : this is too great a compliment." JOHNSON: "I should have thought so, if I had not heard you talk."

Johnson advised Boswell to complete a dictionary of words peculiar to Scotland, of which he had shown him a specimen. "Sir," said he, "Ray has made a collection of north-country words : by



collecting those of your country, you will do a useful thing towards the history of the language."

Talking of language, Johnson observed, that Leibnitz had made some progress in a work, tracing all languages up to the Hebrew. "Why, sir," said he, "you would not imagine, that the French *jour*, day, is derived from the Latin *dies*, and yet nothing is more certain; and the intermediate steps are very clear. From *dies*, comes *diurnus*; *diu* is, by inaccurate ears, or inaccurate pronunciation, easily confounded with *giu*; then the Italians form a substantive of the ablative of an adjective, and thence *giurna*, or, as they make it, *giorno*; which is readily contracted into *giour*, or *jour*." He observed that the Bohemian language was true Slavonic. Mr. Kristrom, a Swede, said it had some similarity with the German. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, to be sure, such parts of Slavonia as confine with Germany will borrow German words; and such parts as confine with Tartary will borrow Tartar words."

He said, he never had it properly ascertained, that the Scotch Highlanders and the Irish understood each other. Boswell told him, that his cousin, colonel Graham, of the Royal Highlanders, whom he met at Drogheda, said they did. JOHNSON. "Sir, if the Highlanders understood Irish, why translate the New Testament into Erse, as was lately done at Edinburgh, when there is an Irish translation?" BOSWELL. "Although the Erse and Irish are both dialects of the same language, there may be a good deal of diversity between them, as between the different dialects in Italy."

Sir Alexander Macdonald said to him, "I have

been correcting several Scottish accents in my friend Boswell: I doubt, sir, if any Scotchman ever attains to a perfect English pronunciation."

JOHNSON. "Why, sir, few of them do, because they do not persevere, after acquiring a certain degree of it; but, sir, there can be no doubt, that they may attain to a perfect English pronunciation, if they will: we find how near they come to it; and certainly a man who conquers nineteen parts of the Scottish accent, may conquer the twentieth. But, sir, when a man has got the better of nine tenths, he grows weary, he relaxes his diligence, he finds he has corrected his accent so far as not to be disagreeable, and he no longer desires his friends to tell him when he is wrong; nor does he choose to be told. Sir, when people watch me narrowly, and I do not watch myself, they will find me out to be of a particular county: in the same manner, Dunning may be found out to be a Devonshire man; so most Scotchmen may be found out. But, sir, little aberrations are of no disadvantage. I never caught Mallet in a Scotch accent; and yet Mallet, I suppose, was past five-and-twenty before he came to London."

The earl of Marchmont, with great good-humour, related, that the master of a shop in London, where he was not known, said to him, "I suppose, sir, you are an American." "Why so, sir?" said his lordship. "Because, sir," replied the shopkeeper, "you speak neither English nor Scotch, but something different from both, which I conclude is the language of America."

BOSWELL. "It may be of use, sir, to have a dictionary to ascertain the pronunciation." JOHNSON.

"Why, sir, my Dictionary shows you the accents of words, if you can but remember them." BOSWELL. "But, sir, we want marks to ascertain the pronunciation of the vowels: Sheridan, I believe, has finished such a work." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, consider how much easier it is to learn a language by the ear, than by any marks. Sheridan's Dictionary may do very well; but you cannot always carry it about with you: and, when you want the word, you have not the Dictionary.\* It is like a man who has a sword that will not draw: it is an admirable sword, to be sure; but while your enemy is cutting your throat, you are unable to use it. Besides, sir, what entitles Sheridan to fix the pronunciation of English? He has, in the first place, the disadvantage of being an Irishman: and if he says he will fix it after the example of the best company, why they differ among themselves. I remember an instance: when I published the Plan for my Dictionary, lord Chesterfield told me that the word *great* should be pronounced so as to rhyme to *state*; and sir William Yonge sent me word, that it should be pronounced so as to rhyme to *seat*, and that none but an Irishman would pronounce it *grait*. Now here were two men of the highest rank, the one the best speaker in the house of lords, the other the best speaker in the house of commons, differing entirely."

A person was mentioned, who, it was said, could take down in short hand the speeches in parliament with perfect exactness. JOHNSON. "Sir, it is im-

\* This remark was equally applicable to his own; but he was no friend to Sheridan.—*Ed.*

possible. I remember one Angel, who came to me to write for him a preface or dedication to a book upon short hand, and he professed to write as fast as a man could speak. In order to try him, I took down a book, and read while he wrote; and I favoured him, for I read more deliberately than usual. I had proceeded but a very little way, when he begged I would desist, for he could not follow me."

Boswell read to him a letter which lord Monboddo had written, containing some critical remarks upon the style of his Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland. His lordship praised the very fine passage upon landing at Icolmkill: but his own style being exceedingly dry and hard, he disapproved of the richness of Johnson's language, and of his frequent use of metaphorical expressions. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, this criticism would be just, if, in my style, superfluous words, or words too big for the thoughts, could be pointed out; but this I do not believe can be done. For instance, in the passage which lord Monboddo admires, 'We were now treading that illustrious region,' the word *illustrious* contributes nothing to the mere narration; for the fact might be told without it: but it is not therefore superfluous; for it wakes the mind to peculiar attention, where something of more than usual importance is to be presented. 'Illustrious!'—for what?—and then the sentence proceeds to expand the circumstances connected with Iona. And, sir, as to metaphorical expression, that is a great excellence in style, when it is used with propriety; for it gives you two ideas for one—conveys the meaning more luminously, and generally with a perception of delight."

He found fault with Boswell, for using the phrase

to *make* money. "Don't you see," said he, "the impropriety of it? To *make* money is to *coin* it: you should say *get* money." The phrase, however, is pretty current. But Johnson was at all times jealous of infractions upon the genuine English language, and prompt to repress colloquial barbarisms; such as *pledging myself, for undertaking; line, for department or branch, as, the civil line, the banking line.*\* He was particularly indignant against the almost universal use of the word *idea* in the sense of *notion, or opinion*, when it is clear that *idea* can only signify something of which an image can be formed in the mind. We may have an *idea* or *image* of a mountain, a tree, a building; but we cannot surely have an *idea* or *image* of an *argument* or *proposition*. Yet we hear the sages of the law 'delivering their *ideas* upon the question under consideration;' and the first speakers in parliament 'entirely coinciding in the *idea* which has been ably stated by an honourable member;'—or, 'reprobating an *idea* as unconstitutional, and fraught with the most dangerous consequences to a great and free country.' Johnson called this 'modern cant.' "

E. "The Irish language is not primitive: it is Teutonic; a mixture of the northern tongues: it has much English in it." JOHNSON. "It may have been radically Teutonic; but English and High Dutch have no similarity to the eye, though radically the same. Once, when looking into low Dutch, I found, in a whole page, only one word similar to English; *stroem*, like *stream*, and it signified *tide*."

\* A chandler's shop is now scarcely ever advertised to be let or sold, but as "a shop in the *general line*."—Ed.

E. "I remember having seen a Dutch sonnet, in which I found this word, *roesnopies*. Nobody would think at first that this could be English; but when we inquire, we find *roes*, rose; and *nopie*, knob; so we have *rose-buds*."

When Johnson was engaged on the Lives of the Poets, Boswell applied to the earl of Marchmont, to give him some information concerning Pope. The earl complied with great readiness, but asked, "Will he write the Lives of the Poets impartially? He was the first that brought Whig and Tory into a Dictionary. And what do you think of his definition of *excise*? Do you know the history of his aversion to the word *transpire*?" Then taking down the folio Dictionary, he showed it, with this censure on its secondary sense: "To escape from secrecy to notice; a sense lately innovated from France, without necessity." "The truth was," said his lordship, "lord Bolingbroke, who left the Jacobites, first used it; therefore it was to be condemned. He should have shown what word would do for it, if it was unnecessary." Boswell afterwards put the question to Johnson. "Why, sir," said he, "*get abroad*." BOSWELL. "That, sir, is using two words." JOHNSON. "Sir, there is no end of this. You may as well insist to have a word for old age." BOSWELL. "Well, sir, *Senectus*." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, to insist always that there should be one word to express a thing in English, because there is one in another language, is to change the language."

Dr. Johnson seemed to take a pleasure in speaking in his own style; for when he had carelessly missed it, he would repeat the thought translated into it. Talking of the comedy of the Rehearsal, he

said, "It has not wit enough to keep it sweet." This was easy;—he therefore caught himself, and pronounced a more round sentence—"It has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction."

Boswell, talking of translation, said, he could not define it, nor could he think of a similitude to illustrate it; but that it appeared to him, the translation of poetry could be only imitation. JOHNSON. "You may translate books of science exactly. You may also translate history, in so far as it is not embellished with oratory, which is poetical. Poetry, indeed, cannot be translated; and, therefore, it is the poets that preserve languages; for we would not be at the trouble to learn a language, if we could have all that is written in it just as well in a translation; but, as the beauties of poetry cannot be preserved in any language except that in which it was originally written, we learn the language."

Johnson told, in his lively manner, the following literary anecdote: "Green and Guthrie, an Irishman and a Scotchman, undertook a translation of Duhalde's History of China. Green said of Guthrie, that he knew no English; and Guthrie of Green, that he knew no French; and these two undertook to translate Duhalde's History of China. In this translation there was found,—'the twenty-sixth day of the new moon.' Now, as the whole age of the moon is but twenty-eight days, the moon, instead of being new, was nearly as old as it could be. The blunder arose from their mistaking the word *neuvième*, ninth, for *nouvelle*, or *neuve*, new."

Mr. Wilkes described oratory, as accompanied with all the charms of poetical expression. JOHNSON. "No, sir; oratory is the power of beating down

your adversary's arguments, and putting better in their place." WILKES. "But this does not move the passions." JOHNSON. "He must be a weak man, who is to be so moved." WILKES. (naming a celebrated orator) "Amidst all the brilliancy of \* \* \* \*s imagination, and the exuberance of his wit, there is a strange want of *taste*. It was observed of Apelles's Venus, that her flesh seemed as if she had been nourished by roses: his oratory would sometimes make one suspect that he eats potatoes, and drinks whisky."

Johnson and Boswell were conversing of public speaking. JOHNSON. "We must not estimate a man's powers by his being able or not able to deliver his sentiments in public. Isaac Hawkins Browne, one of the first wits of this country, got into parliament, and never opened his mouth. For my own part, I think it is more disgraceful never to try to speak, than to try it, and fail; as it is more disgraceful not to fight, than to fight, and be beaten." This argument appeared to Boswell fallacious; for if a man has not spoken, it may be said, that he would have done very well if he had tried; whereas, if he has tried and failed, there is nothing to be said for him: he therefore asked, "Why then is it thought disgraceful for a man not to fight, and not disgraceful not to speak in public?" JOHNSON. "Because there may be other reasons for a man's not speaking in public, than want of resolution; he may have nothing to say (laughing): whereas, sir, you know courage is reckoned the greatest of all virtues; because, unless a man has that virtue, he has no security for preserving any other."



At Mr. Thrale's, one evening, he repeated his usual paradoxical declamation against action in public speaking. "Action can have no effect upon reasonable minds. It may augment noise, but it never can enforce argument. If you speak to a dog, you use action; you hold up your hand thus, because he is a brute; and, in proportion as men are removed from brutes, action will have the less influence upon them." **MRS. THRALE.** "What then, sir, becomes of Demosthenes's saying—'Action, action, action?'" **JOHNSON.** "Demosthenes, madam, spoke to an assembly of brutes; to a barbarous people."

## No. XII.

### POLITICS.

**BOSWELL**, having accompanied **Johnson** on a visit to Oxford, tells us, among other things, "In an evening we frequently took long walks from Oxford into the country, returning to supper. Once, in our way home, we viewed the ruins of the abbeys of Oseney and Rewley, near Oxford. After at least half an hour's silence, **Johnson** said, 'I viewed them with indignation!' We had then a long conversation on Gothic buildings; and in talking of the form of old halls, he said, 'In these halls, the fire-place was anciently always in the middle of the room, till the Whigs removed it on one side.'"—An unquestionable improvement: though **Johnson** was so desperate a Tory, that it seems he would rather have been smothered with smoke, after the manner of our fore-

fathers, than owe any obligations to those of opposite political principles.

Even this zealous friend of his admits "His introducing his own opinions, and even prejudices, under general definitions of words, while, at the same time, the original meaning of the words is not explained; as his *Tory*, *Whig*, *Pension*, *Oats*, *Excise*, and a few more, cannot be fully defended, and must be placed to the account of capricious and humorous indulgence. Talking to me upon this subject when we were at Ashbourne in 1777, he mentioned a still stronger instance of the predominance of his private feelings in the composition of this work, than any now to be found in it. 'You know, sir, lord Gower forsook the old Jacobite interest. When I came to the word *Renegado*, after telling that it meant "one who deserts to the enemy, a revolter," I added, "*Sometimes we say a Gower.*" Thus it went to the press; but the printer had more wit than I, and struck it out.'"

On another occasion, this gentleman observes, "The London Chronicle, which was the only newspaper he constantly took in, being brought, the office of reading it aloud was assigned to me. I was diverted by his impatience. He made me pass over so many parts, that my task was very easy. He would not suffer one of the petitions to the king about the Middlesex election to be read."

"To such a degree of unrestrained frankness," says Boswell, "had he now accustomed me, that, in the course of this evening, I talked of the numerous reflections which had been thrown out against him on account of his having a pension from his present majesty. 'Why, sir, said he, with a hearty laugh,

it is a mighty foolish noise that they make.\* I have accepted of a pension as a reward, which has been thought due to my literary merit ; and now that I have this pension, I am the same man in every respect that I have ever been ; I retain the same principles. It is true, that I cannot now curse (smiling) the house of Hanover ; nor would it be decent of me to drink king James's health in the wine that king George gives me money to pay for : but, sir, I think that the pleasure of cursing the house of Hanover, and drinking king James's health, are amply overbalanced by three hundred pounds a year.'

"There was here, most certainly, an affectation of more Jacobitism than he really had ; and indeed, an intention of admitting for the moment, in a much greater extent than it really existed, the charge of disaffection imputed to him by the world, merely for the purpose of showing how dexterously he could repel an attack, even though he were placed in the most disadvantageous position ; for I have heard him declare, that if holding up his right hand would have secured victory at Culloden to prince Charles's army, he was not sure he would have held it up ; so little confidence had he in the right claimed by the house of Stuart, and so fearful was he of the consequences of another revolution on the throne of Great Britain ; and Mr. Topham Beauclerk assured me, he had heard him say this before he had his pension. At another time, he said to Mr. Langton,

\* "When I mentioned the same idle clamour to him several years afterwards, he said, with a smile, 'I wish my pension were twice as large, that they might make twice as much noise.'"

‘Nothing has ever offered, that has made it worth my while to consider the question fully.’ He, however, also said to the same gentleman, talking of king James the Second, ‘It was become impossible for him to reign any longer in this country.’ He, no doubt, had an early attachment to the house of Stuart; but his zeal had cooled as his reason strengthened. Indeed, I heard him once say, ‘that after the death of a violent Whig, with whom he used to contend with great eagerness, he felt his Toryism much abated.’ I suppose, he meant Mr. Walmsley.

“Yet, there is no doubt, that at earlier periods, he was wont often to exercise both his pleasantry and ingenuity in talking Jacobitism. My much respected friend, Dr. Douglas, now bishop of Salisbury, has favoured me with the following admirable instance, from his lordship’s own recollection. One day, when dining at old Mr. Langton’s, where Miss Roberts, his niece, was one of the company—Johnson, with his usual complacent attention to the fair sex, took her by the hand, and said, ‘My dear, I hope you are a Jacobite.’ Old Mr. Langton, who, though a high and steady Tory, was attached to the present royal family, seemed offended, and asked Johnson, with great warmth, what he could mean by putting such a question to his niece? ‘Why, sir,’ said Johnson, I meant no offence to your niece; I meant her a great compliment. A Jacobite, sir, believes in the divine right of kings. He that believes in the divine right of kings believes in a divinity. A Jacobite believes in the divine right of bishops. He that believes in the divine right of bishops, believes in the divine authority of the Christian religion: therefore, sir, a Jacobite is neither an

atheist nor a deist. That cannot be said of a Whig ; for *Whiggism is a negation of all principle.*"

They talked of his two principal pamphlets, *The False Alarm*, and *Thoughts concerning Falkland's Islands*. JOHNSON. " Well, sir, which of them did you think the best ?" BOSWELL. " I liked the second best." JOHNSON. " Why, sir, I liked the first best ; and Beattie liked the first best. Sir, there is a subtlety of disquisition in the first that is worth all the fire of the second." BOSWELL. " Pray, sir, is it true that lord North paid you a visit, and that you got two hundred a year in addition to your pension ?" JOHNSON. " No, sir : except what I had from the bookseller, I did not get a farthing by them : and, between you and me, I believe lord North is no friend to me." BOSWELL. " How so, sir ?" JOHNSON. " Why, sir, you cannot account for the fancies of men."

That *Taxation no Tyranny* was written at the desire of those who were then in power, there can be no doubt ; and, indeed, he owned to Boswell, that it had been revised and curtailed by some of them. He told him, that they had struck out one passage, which was to this effect : " That the colonists could with no solidity argue, from their not having been taxed while in their infancy, that they should not now be taxed. We do not put a calf into the plough ; we wait till he is an ox." He said, " they struck it out either critically, as too ludicrous, or politically, as too exasperating ; I care not which. It was their business. If an architect says, I will build five stories, and the man who employs him says, I will have only three—the employer is to decide." " Yes, sir," said Boswell, " in ordinary cases : but

should it be so when the architect gives his skill and labour *gratis* ?”

Of this pamphlet, he said, “ I think I have not been attacked enough for it. Attack is the re-action : I never think I have hit hard unless it rebounds.”

BOSWELL. “ I don't know sir what you would be at. Five or six shots of small arms in every newspaper, and repeated cannonading in pamphlets, might, I think, satisfy you. But, sir, you'll never make out this match, of which we have talked, with a certain political lady, since you are so severe against her principles.” JOHNSON. “ Nay, sir, I have the better chance for that. She is like the Amazons of old ; she must be courted by the sword. But I have not been severe upon her.” BOSWELL. “ Yes, sir, you have made her ridiculous.” JOHNSON. “ That was already done, sir. To endeavour to make *her* ridiculous, is like blacking the chimney.”

He talked with a rough contempt of popular liberty. “ They make a rout about *universal* liberty, without considering, that all that is to be valued, or indeed can be enjoyed by individuals, is *private* liberty. Political liberty is good only so far as it produces private liberty. Now, sir, there is the liberty of the press, which you know is a constant topic. Suppose you and I, and two hundred more, were restrained from printing our thoughts : what then ? What proportion would that restraint upon us bear to the private happiness of the nation.”

This mode of representing the inconveniences of restraint as light and insignificant, was a kind of sophistry, in which he delighted to indulge himself, in opposition to the extreme laxity, for which it has been fashionable for too many to argue ; when it is

evident, upon reflection, that the very essence of government is restraint; and certain it is, that as government produces rational happiness, too much restraint is better than too little. But when restraint is unnecessary, and so close as to gall those who are subject to it, the people may and ought to remonstrate; and, if relief is not granted, to resist. Of this manly and spirited principle, no man was more convinced than Johnson himself.

He would not admit the importance of the question concerning the legality of general warrants. "Such a power," he said, "must be vested in every government, to answer particular cases of necessity; and there can be no just cause of complaint, but when it is abused, for which those who administer government must be answerable. It is a matter of much indifference; a matter about which the people care so very little, that were a man to be sent over Britain to offer them an exemption from it at a half-penny a piece, very few would purchase it." Boswell adds, "This was a specimen of that laxity of talking, which I had heard him fairly acknowledge: for surely, while the power of granting general warrants was supposed to be legal, and the apprehension of them hung over our heads, we did not possess that security of freedom, congenial to our happy constitution, and which, by the intrepid exertions of Mr. Wilkes, has been happily established."

Speaking of the national debt, he said, "It is an idle dream to suppose that the country can sink under it. Let the public creditors be ever so clamorous, the interest of millions must always prevail over that of thousands."

Boswell mentioned the motion which had been

made in the house of commons, to abolish the fast of the 30th of January. "Why, sir, I could have wished that it had been a temporary act, perhaps, to have expired with the century. I am against abolishing it, because that would be declaring it wrong to establish it; but I should have no objection to make an act, continuing it for another century, and then letting it expire."

On another occasion, Boswell told him, that Mrs. Macauley said, she wondered how he could reconcile his political principles with his moral; his notions of inequality and subordination with wishing well to the happiness of all mankind, who might live so agreeably, had they all their portions of land, and none to domineer over another. JOHNSON. "Why sir, I reconcile my principles very well, because mankind are happier in a state of inequality and subordination. Were they to be in this pretty state of equality, they would soon degenerate into brutes; they would become Monboddos nation;—their tails would grow. Sir, all would be losers, were all to work for all:—they would have no intellectual improvement. All intellectual improvement arises from leisure: all leisure arises from one working for another."

An eminent public character being mentioned—JOHNSON. "I remember being present, when he showed himself to be so corrupted, or at least something so different from what I think right, as to maintain, that a member of parliament should go along with his party, right or wrong. Now, sir, this is so remote from native virtue—from scholastic virtue—that a good man must have undergone great change, before he can reconcile himself to such a



doctrine: it is maintaining, that you may lie to the public; for you lie, when you call that right which you think wrong, or the reverse. A friend of ours, who is too much an echo of that gentleman, observed, that a man who does not stick uniformly to a party, is only waiting to be bought. Why then, said I, he is only waiting to be what that gentleman is already."

Of a person who differed from him in politics, he said, "In private life he is a very honest gentleman; but I will not allow him to be so in public life. People *may* be honest, though they are doing wrong: that is between their Maker and them: but *we*, who are suffering by their pernicious conduct, are to destroy them. We are sure that \* \* \* acts from interest. We know what his genuine principles were. They who allow their passions to confound the distinctions between right and wrong, are criminal. They may be convinced; but they have not come honestly by their conviction."

It having been mentioned that a certain female political writer, whose doctrines he disliked, had of late become very fond of dress, sat hours together at her toilet, and even put on rouge—JOHNSON. "She is better employed at her toilet than using her pen. It is better she should be reddening her own cheeks, than blackening other people's characters."

Johnson arraigned the modern politics of this country, as entirely devoid of all principle of whatever kind. "Politics," said he, "are now nothing more than means of rising in the world. With this sole view do men engage in politics, and their whole conduct proceeds upon it. How different in that respect is the state of the nation now from what it was in the time of Charles the First, during the

Usurpation, and after the Restoration, in the time of Charles the Second. Hudibras affords a strong proof, how much hold political principles had then upon the minds of men. There is in Hudibras a great deal of bullion, which will always last : but, to be sure, the brightest strokes of his wit owed their force to the impression of the characters which was upon men's minds at the time ; to their knowing them at table and in the street ; in short, being familiar with them ; and, above all, to his satire being directed against those whom a little while before they had hated and feared. The nation in general has ever been loyal ; has been at all times attached to the monarch, though a few daring rebels have been wonderfully powerful for a time. 'The murder of Charles the First was undoubtedly not committed with the approbation or consent of the people. Had that been the case, parliament would not have ventured to consign the regicides to their deserved punishment : and we know what exuberance of joy there was when Charles the Second was restored. If Charles the Second had bent all his mind to it—had made it his sole object—he might have been as absolute as Louis the Fourteenth.' A gentleman observed, he would have done no harm if he had. JOHNSON. " Why, sir, absolute princes seldom do any harm : but they who are governed by them are governed by chance. There is no security for good government." CAMBRIDGE. " There have been many sad victims to absolute government." JOHNSON. " So, sir, have there been to popular factions."

Boswell consulting him upon a cause, *Paterson and others* against *Alexander and others*, which had

been decided by a casting vote in the court of session, determining, that the corporation of Stirling was corrupt, and setting aside the election of some of their officers ; because it was proved, that three of the leading men, who influenced the majority, had entered into an unjustifiable compact, of which, however, the majority were ignorant ; he dictated to him, after a little consideration, the following sentences upon the subject :

“ There is a difference between majority and superiority ; majority is applied to number, and superiority to power ; and power, like many other things, is to be estimated, *non numero sed pondere*. Now, though the greater *number* is not corrupt, the greater *weight* is corrupt, so that corruption predominates in the borough, taken *collectively*, though, perhaps, taken *numerically*, the greater part may be uncorrupt. That borough, which is so constituted as to act corruptly, is in the eye of reason corrupt, whether it be by the uncontrollable power of a few, or by an accidental pravity of the multitude. The objection, in which is urged the injustice of making the innocent suffer with the guilty, is an objection not only against society, but against the possibility of society. All societies, great and small, subsist upon this condition ; that as the individuals derive advantages from union, they may likewise suffer inconveniences ; that as those who do nothing, and sometimes those who do ill, will have the honours and emoluments of general virtue and general prosperity ; so those likewise who do nothing, or perhaps do well, must be involved in the consequences of predominant corruption.” The decision was affirmed in the house of lords.

He observed of lord Bute, "It was said of Augustus, that it would have been better for Rome that he had never been born, or had never died: so, it would have been better for this nation if lord Bute had never been minister, or had never resigned."

He said, "Walpole was a minister given by the king to the people: Pitt was a minister given by the people to the king—as an adjunct."

Having mentioned his friend, the second lord Southwell, he said, "Lord Southwell was the highest-bred man without insolence, that I ever was in company with; the most *qualified* I ever saw. Lord Orrery was not dignified; lord Chesterfield was, but he was insolent. Lord \*\*\*\*\* is a man of coarse manners, but a man of abilities and information. I don't say he is a man I would set at the head of a nation, though perhaps he may be as good as the next prime minister that comes; but he is a man to be at the head of a club;—I don't say *our* club;—for there's no such club." BOSWELL. "But, sir, was he not once a factious man?" JOHNSON. "O, yes, sir, as factious a fellow as could be found; one who was for sinking us all into the mob." BOSWELL. "How then, sir, did he get into favour with the king?" JOHNSON. "Because, sir, I suppose, he promised the king to do whatever the king pleased."

When the corn-laws were in agitation in Ireland, by which that country has been enabled not only to feed itself, but to export corn to a large amount, sir Thomas Robinson observed, that those laws might be prejudicial to the corn trade of England.

"Sir Thomas," said he, "you talk the language of a savage : what, sir ! would you prevent any people from feeding themselves, if by any honest means they can do it ?"

BOSWELL. "Pray, Mr. Dilly, how does Dr. Leland's History of Ireland sell ?" JOHNSON. (bursting forth with a generous indignation,) "The Irish are in a most unnatural state ; for we see there the minority prevailing over the majority. There is no instance, even in the ten persecutions, of such severity as that which the Protestants of Ireland have exercised against the Catholics. Did we tell them we have conquered them, it would be above board : to punish them by confiscation and other penalties, as rebels, was monstrous injustice. King William was not their lawful sovereign : he had not been acknowledged by the parliament of Ireland, when they appeared in arms against him."

He said, "The duration of parliament, whether for seven years or the life of the king, appears to me so immaterial, that I would not give a half crown to turn the scale one way or the other. The *habeas corpus* is the single advantage which our government has over that of other countries."

He observed, that "The statutes against bribery were intended to prevent upstarts with money from getting into parliament ;" adding, that "if he were a gentleman of landed property, he would turn out all his tenants who did not vote for the candidate whom he supported." LANGTON. "Would it not, sir, be checking the freedom of election ?" JOHNSON. "Sir, the law does not mean that the privilege of voting should be independent of old fa-

mily interest; of the permanent property of the country."\*

The following conversation took place between a company of eminent men, of which Johnson was one.

E. "We hear prodigious complaints at present of emigration. I am convinced that emigration makes a country more populous." J. "That sounds very much like a paradox." E. "Exportation of men, like exportation of all other commodities, makes more be produced." JOHNSON. "But there would be more people were there not emigration, provided there were food for more." E. "No; leave a few breeders, and you'll have more people than if there were no emigration." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, it is plain there will be more people if there are more breeders. Thirty cows in good pasture will produce more calves than ten cows, provided they have good bulls." E. "There are bulls enough in Ireland." JOHNSON. (smiling.) "So, sir, I should think, from your argument." BOSWELL. "You said, exportation of men, like exportation of other commodities, makes more be produced: but a bounty is given to encourage the exportation of corn, and no bounty is given for the exportation of men; though, indeed, those who go gain by it." R. "But the bounty on the exportation of corn is paid at home." E. "That's the same thing." JOHNSON. "No, sir." R. "A man who stays at home, gains nothing by his neighbour's emigrating." BOSWELL. "I can understand that emigration may be the cause that more people may be

\* A ready mode of emancipating ourselves from a law we do not like.—*Ed.*

produced in a country; but the country will not therefore be the more populous; for the people issue from it: it can only be said, that there is a flow of people. It is an encouragement to have children, to know that they can get a living by emigration." R. "Yes, if there were an emigration of children under six years of age: but they don't emigrate till they could earn their livelihood in some way at home." C. "It is remarkable, that the most unhealthy countries, where there are the most destructive diseases, such as Egypt and Bengal, are the most populous." JOHNSON. "Countries which are the most populous have the most destructive diseases. *That* is the true state of the proposition." C. "Holland is very unhealthy, yet it is exceedingly populous." JOHNSON. "I know not that Holland is unhealthy; but its populousness is owing to an influx of people from all other countries. Disease cannot be the cause of populousness; for it not only carries off a great proportion of the people, but those who are left are weakened, and unfit for the purposes of increase."

Johnson's notion of the duty of a member of parliament, sitting upon an election-committee, was very high; and when he was told of a gentleman, upon one of those committees, who read the newspapers part of the time, and slept the rest, while the merits of a vote were examined by the counsel; and as an excuse, when challenged by the chairman for such behaviour, bluntly answered, "I had made up my mind upon that case;"—Johnson, with an indignant contempt, said, "If he was such a rogue as to make up his mind upon a case without hearing it, he should not have been such a fool as to tell it."

"I think," said Mr. Dudley Long, now North, "the doctor has pretty plainly made him out to be both rogue and fool."

R. "Mr. E. I don't mean to flatter ; but when posterity reads one of your speeches in parliament, it will be difficult to believe that you took so much pains, knowing with certainty, that it could produce no effect—that not one vote would be gained by it." E. "Waving your compliment to me, I shall say, in general, that it is very well worth while for a man to take pains to speak well in parliament. A man, who has vanity, speaks to display his talents ; and, if a man speaks well, he gradually establishes a certain reputation and consequence in the general opinion, which sooner or later will have its political reward. Besides, though not one vote is gained, a good speech has its effect. Though an act which has been ably opposed passes into a law, yet in its progress it is modelled, it is softened in such a manner, that we see plainly the minister has been told, that the members attached to him are so sensible of its injustice or absurdity, from what they have heard, that it must be altered." JOHNSON. "And, sir, there is a gratification of pride. Though we cannot out-vote them, we will out-argue them. They shall not do wrong, without its being shown both to themselves and to the world." E. "The house of commons is a mixed body. (I except the minority, which I hold to be pure [smiling]; but I take the whole house.) It is a mass by no means pure ; but neither is it wholly corrupt, though there is a large proportion of corruption in it. There are many members who generally go with the minister, who will not go all lengths. There are many honest,



well-meaning country gentlemen, who are in parliament only to keep up the consequence of their families. Upon most of these a good speech will have influence." JOHNSON. "We are all more or less governed by interest: but interest will not make us do every thing. In a case which admits of doubt, we try to think on the side which is for our interest, and generally bring ourselves to act accordingly: but the subject must admit of diversity of colouring; it must receive a colour on that side. In the house of commons there are members enough who will not vote what is grossly unjust or absurd. No, sir, there must always be right enough, or appearance of right, to keep wrong in countenance." BOSWELL. "There is surely always a majority in parliament who have places, or who want to have them, and who therefore will be generally ready to support government without requiring any pretext." E. "True, sir; that majority will always follow

*Quo clamor vocat et turba faventium.\**

BOSWELL. "Well, now, let us take the common phrase, Place-hunters. I thought they had hunted without regard to any thing, just as their huntsman, the minister, leads, looking only to the prey."\* J. "But, taking your metaphor, you know that in

\* Lord Bolingbroke, who, however detestable as a metaphysician, must be allowed to have had admirable talents as a political writer—thus describes the house of commons, in his Letter to sir William Windham: "You know the nature of that assembly; they grow, like hounds, fond of the man who shows them game, and by whose halloo they are used to be encouraged."

hunting there are few so desperately keen as to follow without reserve. Some do not choose to leap ditches and hedges, and risk their necks, or gallop over steeps, or even to dirty themselves in bogs and mire." BOSWELL. "I am glad there are some good, quiet, moderate, political hunters." E. "I believe in any body of men in England I should have been in the minority: I have always been in the minority."

P. "The house of commons resembles a private company. How seldom is any man convinced by another's argument! passion and pride rise against it."

R. "What would be the consequence, if a minister, sure of a majority in the house of commons, should resolve that there should be no speaking at all upon his side?" E. "He must soon go out. That has been tried, but it was found it would not do."

Russia being mentioned as likely to become a great empire, by the rapid increase of population: JOHNSON. "Why, sir, I see no prospect of their propagating more. They can have no more children than they can get. I know of no way to make them breed more than they do. It is not from reason and prudence that people marry, but from inclination. A man is poor; he thinks, 'I cannot be worse, and so I'll ev'n take Peggy.'" BOSWELL. "But have not nations been more populous at one period than another?" JOHNSON. "Yes, sir; but that has been owing to the people being less thinned at one period than another, whether by emigrations, war, or pestilence; not by their being more or less prolific. Births at all times bear the same proportion to the same number of people." BOSWELL. "But, to consider the state of our own country:—does not throwing a number of farms into one hand, hurt

population? JOHNSON. "Why no, sir; the same quantity of food being produced, will be consumed by the same number of mouths, though the people may be disposed of in different ways. We see, if corn be dear, and butchers' meat cheap, the farmers will apply themselves to the raising of corn, till it becomes plentiful and cheap; and then butchers' meat becomes dear: so that an equality is always preserved. No, sir, let fanciful men do as they will: depend upon it, it is difficult to disturb the system of life." BOSWELL. "But, sir, is it not a very bad thing for landlords to oppress their tenants by raising their rents?" JOHNSON. "Very bad; but, sir, it never can have any general influence; it may distress some individuals. For, consider this: landlords cannot do without tenants. Now, tenants will not give more for land than land is worth. If they can make more of their money by keeping a shop, or any other way, they'll do it, and so oblige landlords to let land come back to a reasonable rent, in order that they may get tenants. Land, in England, is an article of commerce. A tenant, who pays his landlord his rent, thinks himself no more obliged to him, than you think yourself obliged to a man, in whose shop you buy a piece of goods. He knows the landlord does not let him have his land for less than he can get from others, in the same manner as the shopkeeper sells his goods. No shopkeeper sells a yard of ribband for six-pence, when seven-pence is the current price." BOSWELL. "But, sir, is it not better that tenants should be dependent on landlords?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, as there are many more tenants than landlords, perhaps, strictly speaking, we should wish not.

But, if you please, you may let your lands, and so get the value, part in money, and part in homage. I should agree with you in that. BOSWELL. "So, sir, you laugh at schemes of political improvement." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, most schemes of political improvement are very laughable things."

## No. XIII.

## GOVERNMENT.

A PARTY of literary friends spending the evening together at the Mitre tavern in Fleet-street, Goldsmith, as usual, endeavoured, with too much eagerness, to *shine*, and disputed very warmly with Johnson against the well-known maxim of the British constitution, "the king can do no wrong;" affirming, that "what was morally false could not be politically true; and, as the king might, in the exercise of his regal power, command and cause the doing of what was wrong, it certainly might be said, in sense and in reason, that he could do wrong." JOHNSON. "Sir, you are to consider, that in our constitution, according to its true principles, the king is the head; he is supreme; he is above every thing; and there is no power by which he can be tried: therefore it is, sir, that we hold the king can do no wrong; that whatever may happen to be wrong in government, may not be above our reach, by being ascribed to majesty. Redress is always to be had against oppression, by punishing the immediate agents. The king, though he should command, cannot force a judge to condemn a man unjustly; therefore, it is

the judge whom we prosecute and punish. Political institutions are formed upon the consideration of what will most frequently tend to the good of the whole, although now and then exceptions may occur. Thus it is better, in general, that a nation should have a supreme legislative power, although it may at times be abused : and then, sir, there is this consideration—that *if the abuse be enormous, Nature will rise up, and, claiming her original rights, overturn a corrupt political system.*"

In the year 1769, politics being mentioned, he said, " This petitioning is a new mode of distressing government, and a mighty easy one. I will undertake to get petitions either against quarter guineas or half guineas, with the help of a little hot wine. There must be no yielding to encourage this ; the object is not important enough. We are not to blow up half a dozen palaces, because one cottage is burning."\*

He observed, " Providence has wisely ordered, that the more numerous men are, the more difficult it is for them to agree in any thing ; and so they are governed. There is no doubt, that if the poor should reason, ' We'll be the poor no longer ; we'll make the rich take their turn '—they could easily do it, were it not that they can't agree. So the common soldiers, though so much more numerous than their officers, are governed by them for the same reason."

Dr. Maxwell said of Johnson, " He detested the idea of governing by parliamentary corruption ; and asserted most strenuously, that a prince, steadily and

\* Unquestionably we should, if the burning this one cottage threaten a general conflagration.—*Ed.*

conspicuously pursuing the interests of his people, could not fail of parliamentary concurrence. A prince of ability, he contended, might and should be the directing soul and spirit of his own administration ; in short, his own minister, and not the mere head of a party : and then, and not till then, would the royal dignity be sincerely respected.

“ He seemed to think, that a certain degree of crown influence over the houses of parliament, (not meaning a corrupt and shameful dependence) was very salutary, nay, even necessary, in our mixed government. ‘ For,’ said he, ‘ if the members were under no crown influence, and disqualified from receiving any gratification from court, and resembled, as they possibly might, Pym, and Haslerig, and other stubborn and sturdy members of the long parliament, the wheels of government would be totally obstructed. Such men would oppose, merely to show their power, from envy, jealousy, and perversity of disposition ; and not gaining themselves, would hate and oppose all who did : not loving the person of the prince, and conceiving they owed him little gratitude, from the mere spirit of insolence and contradiction, they would oppose and thwart him on all occasions.

“ The inseparable imperfection annexed to all human governments, consisted, he said, in not being able to create a sufficient fund of virtue and principle, to carry the laws into due and effectual execution. Wisdom might plan, but virtue alone can execute. And where could sufficient virtue be found ? A variety of delegated, and often discretionary, powers, must be entrusted somewhere ; which, if not governed by integrity and conscience, would ne-

cessarily be abused, till at last the constable would sell his for a shilling."

He had great compassion for the miseries and distresses of the Irish nation, particularly the papists; and severely reprobated the barbarous debilitating policy of the British government, which, he said, was the most detestable mode of persecution. To a gentleman, who hinted such policy might be necessary to support the authority of the English government, he replied, by saying, "Let the authority of the government perish, rather than be maintained by iniquity. Better would it be to restrain the turbulence of the natives by the authority of the sword, and to make them amenable to law and justice by an effectual and vigorous police, than to grind them to powder by all manner of disabilities and incapacities. Better to hang or drown people at once, than, by an unrelenting persecution, to beggar and starve them."

Sir Alexander Macdonald observed, that the chancellors in England are chosen from views much inferior to the office; being chosen from temporary political views. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, in such a government as ours, no man is appointed to an office because he is the fittest for it, nor hardly in any other government; because there are so many connections and dependencies to be studied. A despotic prince may choose a man to an office, merely because he is the fittest for it. The king of Prussia may do it."

In the Scottish schoolmaster's cause, which has been noticed at length under the head EDUCATION, in Part I, lord Mansfield said; in the house of lords, "My lords, severity is not the way to govern either

boys or men." "Nay," said Johnson, "it is the way to *govern* them; I know not whether it be the way to *mend* them."

Upon the state of the nation in 1775, he thus discoursed: "Sir, the great misfortune now is, that government has too little power. All that it has to bestow, must, of necessity, be given to support itself; so that it cannot reward merit. No man, for instance, can now be made a bishop for his learning and piety; his only chance for promotion is his being connected with somebody who has parliamentary interest. Our several ministers in this reign have out-bid each other in concessions to the people. Lord Bute, though a very honourable man—a man who meant well—a man who had his blood full of prerogative—was a theoretical statesman,—a book-minister—and thought this country could be governed by the influence of the crown alone. Then, sir, he gave up a great deal: he advised the king to agree that the judges should hold their places for life, instead of losing them at the accession of a new king. Lord Bute, I suppose, thought to make the king popular by this concession; but the people never minded it; and it was a most impolitic measure. There is no reason why a judge should hold his office for life, more than any other person in public trust. A judge may be partial otherwise than to the crown: we have seen judges partial to the populace. A judge may become corrupt, and yet there may not be legal evidence against him. A judge may become froward from age. A judge may grow unfit for his office in many ways: it was desirable that there should be a possibility of being delivered from him by a new king. That is now gone by an act of parliament *ex*



*gratia* of the crown. Lord Bute advised the king to give up a very large sum of money, for which nobody thanked him. It was of consequence to the king, but nothing to the public, among whom it was divided. When I say lord Bute advised, I mean, that such acts were done when he was minister, and we are to suppose that he advised them.— Lord Bute showed an undue partiality to Scotchmen. He turned out Dr. Nichols, a very eminent man, from being physician to the king, to make room for one of his countrymen, a man very low in his profession. He had \* \* \* \* \* and \* \* \* \* to go on errands for him. He had occasion for people to go on errands for him, but he should not have had Scotchmen; and certainly, he should not have suffered them to have access to him before the first people in England.” BOSWELL. “The admission of one of them before the first people in England, which has given the greatest offence, was no more than what happens at every minister’s levee, where those who attend are admitted in the order that they have come, which is better than admitting them according to their rank; for, if that were to be the rule, a man who has waited all the morning might have the mortification to see a peer, newly come, go in before him, and keep him waiting still.” JOHNSON. “True, sir; but \* \* \* \* should not have come to the levee, to be in the way of people of consequence. He saw lord Bute at all times; and could have said what he had to say at any time, as well as at the levee. There is now no prime minister: there is only an agent for government in the house of commons. We are governed by the cabinet: but there is no one head there since sir Robert Walpole’s time.” BOSWELL.

"What then, sir, is the use of parliament?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, parliament is a large council to the king; and the advantage of such a council is, having a great number of men of property concerned in the legislature, who, for their own interest, will not consent to bad laws. And you must have observed, sir, the administration is feeble and timid, and cannot act with that authority and resolution which is necessary. Were I in power, I would turn out every man who dared to oppose me. Government has the distribution of offices, that it may be enabled to maintain its authority. Lord Bute took down too fast, without building up something new." BOSWELL. "Because, sir, he found a rotten building. The political coach was drawn by a set of bad horses; it was necessary to change them." JOHNSON. "But he should have changed them one by one."

On another occasion, he said, "The mode of government by one may be ill adapted to a small society, but is best for a great nation. The characteristic of our own government at present is imbecility. The magistrates dare not call the guards for fear of being hanged; the guards will not come, for fear of being given up to the blind rage of popular juries." [*Tempora mutantur.*]

Talking of different governments — JOHNSON. "The more contracted power is, the more easily it is destroyed. A country governed by a despot is an inverted cone. Government there cannot be so firm, as when it rests upon a broad basis gradually contracted, as the government of Great Britain, which is founded on the parliament, then is in the privy-council, then in the king." BOSWELL. "Power, when

contracted into the person of a despot, may be easily destroyed, as the prince may be cut off. So Caligula wished that the people of Rome had but one neck, that he might cut them off at a blow." GENERAL OGLETHORPE. "It was of the senate he wished that. The senate, by its usurpation, controlled both the emperor and the people. And don't you think that we see too much of that in our own parliament?"

## No. XIV.

### MORALS.

ON this subject, he said, "The morality of an action depends on the motive from which we act. If I fling half a crown to a beggar with intention to break his head, and he picks it up and buys victuals with it, the physical effect is good; but, with respect to me, the action is very wrong. So, religious exercises, if not performed with an intention to please God, avail us nothing:—as our Saviour says of those who perform them from other motives, 'Verily they have their reward.'"

Of a gentleman who was mentioned, he said, "I have not met with any man, for a long time, who has given me such general displeasure: he is totally fixed in his principles, and wants to puzzle other people." Boswell said his principles had been poisoned by a noted infidel writer, but that he was nevertheless a benevolent good man. JOHNSON. "We can have no dependence upon that instinctive, that constitutional goodness, which is not founded upon principle. I grant you, that such a

man may be a very amiable member of society. I can conceive him placed in such a situation, that he is not much tempted to deviate from what is right; and as every man prefers virtue, when there is not some strong incitement to transgress its precepts, I can conceive him doing nothing wrong. But if such a man stood in need of money, I should not like to trust him; and I should certainly not trust him with young ladies, for *there* there is always temptation. Hume, and other sceptical innovators, are vain men, and will gratify themselves at any expense: truth will not afford sufficient food to their vanity; so they have betaken themselves to error. Truth, sir, is a cow, which will yield such people no more milk, and so they are gone to milk the bull. If I could have allowed myself to gratify my vanity at the expense of truth, what fame might I have acquired! Every thing, which Hume has advanced against Christianity, had passed through my mind long before he wrote. Always remember this—that, after a system is well settled upon positive evidence, a few partial objections ought not to shake it. The human mind is so limited, that it cannot take in all the parts of a subject; so that there may be objections raised against any thing. There are objections against a *plenum*, and objections against a *vacuum*; yet one of them must certainly be true.”

JOHNSON. “I love the university of Salamanca; for when the Spaniards were in doubt as to the lawfulness of their conquering America, the university of Salamanca gave it as their opinion, that it was not lawful.” He spoke this with great emotion, and with that generous warmth, which dic-

tated the lines in his London, against Spanish encroachment.

He talked of the heinousness of the crime of adultery, by which the peace of families was destroyed. He said, "Confusion of progeny constitutes the essence of the crime; and, therefore, a woman who breaks her marriage vow is much more criminal than a man who does it. A man, to be sure, is criminal in the sight of God; but he does not do his wife a very material injury, if he does not insult her: if, for instance, from mere wantonness of appetite, he steals privately to her chamber-maid. Sir, a wife ought not greatly to resent this. I would not receive home a daughter who had run away from her husband on that account. A wife should study to reclaim her husband by more attention to please him. Sir, a man will not, once in a hundred instances, leave his wife, and go to a harlot, if his wife has not been negligent of pleasing."

Here he discovered that acute discrimination, that solid judgment, and that knowledge of human nature, for which he was, upon all occasions, remarkable. Taking care to keep in view the moral and religious duty, as understood in our nation, he showed clearly, from reason and good sense, the greater degree of culpability in the one sex deviating from it than the other; and, at the same time, inculcated a very useful lesson as to *the way to keep him*.

Boswell asked him if it was not hard, that one deviation from chastity should so absolutely ruin a young woman. JOHNSON, "Why no, sir; it is the great principle which she is taught. When she has given up that principle, she has given up every no-

tion of female honour and virtue, which are all included in chastity."

At a party at Mr. Dilly's, he, as usual, defended luxury: "You cannot spend money in luxury without doing good to the poor. Nay, you do more good to them by spending it in luxury—you make them exert industry; whereas, by giving it, you keep them idle. I own, indeed, there may be more virtue in giving it immediately in charity, than in spending it in luxury; though there may be pride in that too. MISS SEWARD. "Is not this Mandeville's doctrine of 'Private Vices Public Benefits?'" JOHNSON. "The fallacy of that book is, that Mandeville defines neither vices nor benefits. He reckons among vices every thing that gives pleasure. He takes the narrowest system of morality—monastic morality—which holds pleasure itself to be a vice; such as eating salt with our fish, because it makes it better; and he reckons wealth as a public benefit, which is by no means always true. Pleasure, of itself, is not a vice. Having a garden, which we all know to be perfectly innocent, is a great pleasure. At the same time, in this state of being there are many pleasures vices, which, however, are so immediately agreeable, that we can hardly abstain from them. The happiness of heaven will be, that pleasure and virtue will be perfectly consistent. Mandeville puts the case of a man who gets drunk at an alehouse; and says it is a public benefit, because so much money is got by it to the public. But it must be considered, that all the good gained by this, through the gradation of alehouse-keeper, brewer, maltster, and farmer, is over-balanced by the evil caused to the man and his

family by his getting drunk. This is the way to try what is vicious ; by ascertaining whether more evil than good is produced by it upon the whole, which is the case in all vice. It may happen, that good is produced by vice, but not as vice ; for instance, a robber may take money from its owner, and give it to one who will make a better use of it. Here is good produced ; but not by the robbery as robbery, but as a translation of property. I read Maudeville forty, or, I believe, fifty years ago. He did not puzzle me ; he opened my views into real life very much. No, it is clear, that the happiness of society depends on virtue. In Sparta, theft was allowed by general consent ; theft, therefore, was *there* not a crime ; but then there was no security ; and what a life must they have had, when there was no security ! Without truth there must be a dissolution of society. As it is, there is so little truth, that we are almost afraid to trust our ears : but how should we be, if falsehood were multiplied ten times ? Society is held together by communication and information ; and I remember this remark of sir Thomas Brown's, ' Do the devils lie ? No, for then hell could not subsist.' "

Johnson had formed the design of writing the history of the war, during which George the Third commenced his reign. On this, Boswell remarks, " How much is it to be regretted that this intention was not fulfilled ! His majestic expression would have carried down to the latest posterity the glorious achievements of his country, with the same fervent glow which they produced on the mind at the time. He would have been under no temptation to deviate in any degree from truth, which he

held very sacred; or to take a licence, which a learned divine told me, he once seemed, in a conversation, jocularly to allow to historians. 'There are (said he) inexcusable lies, and consecrated lies. For instance, we are told, that, on the arrival of the news of the unfortunate battle of Fontenoy, every heart beat, and every eye was in tears. Now we know, that no man ate his dinner the worse; but there *should* have been all this concern; and to say there *was*, (smiling) may be reckoned a consecrated lie.' "

He told Boswell, that he went up to his library without mentioning it to his servant, when he wanted to study secure from interruption; for he would not allow his servant to say he was not at home, when he really was. "A servant's strict regard for truth (said he) must be weakened by such a practice. A philosopher may know, that it is merely a form of denial; but few servants are such nice distinguishers. If I accustom a servant to lie for *me*, have I not reason to apprehend that he will tell many lies for himself?"

He said, "Human experience, which is constantly contradicting theory, is the great test of truth. A system, built upon the discoveries of a great many minds, is always of more strength than what is produced by the mere workings of any one mind, which, of itself, can do little. There is not so poor a book in the world, that would not be a prodigious effort, were it wrought out entirely by a single mind, without the aid of prior investigators. The French writers are superficial, because they are not scholars, and so proceed upon the



mere power of their own minds ; and we see how very little power they have."

The importance of strict and scrupulous veracity cannot be too often inculcated. Johnson was known to be so rigidly attentive to it, that even in his common conversation the slightest circumstance was mentioned with exact precision. The knowledge of his having such a principle and habit made his friends have a perfect reliance on the truth of every thing that he told, however it might have been doubted, if told by many others. "As an instance of this," says Boswell, "I may mention an odd incident which he related as having happened to him one night in Fleet-street. 'A gentlewoman (said he) begged I would give her my arm to assist her in crossing the street, which I accordingly did ; upon which she offered me a shilling, supposing me to be the watchman. I perceived that she was somewhat in liquor.' This, if told by most people, would have been thought an invention ; when told by Johnson, it was believed by his friends as much as if they had seen what had passed."

Boswell saying it was a pity that truth was not so firm as to bid defiance to all attacks, so that it might be shot at as much as people chose to attempt, and yet remain unhurt. JOHNSON. "Then, sir, it would not be shot at. Nobody attempts to dispute that two and two make four : but with contests concerning moral truth, human passions are generally mixed ; and therefore it must ever be liable to assault and misrepresentation."

The same gentleman stated to him this case :—  
"Suppose a man has a daughter, who he knows

has been seduced, but her misfortune is concealed from the world ; should he keep her in his house ? Would he not, by doing so, be accessary to imposition ? And, perhaps, a worthy, unsuspecting man might come and marry this woman, unless the father inform him of the truth." JOHNSON. " Sir, he is accessary to no imposition. His daughter is in his house ; and if a man courts her, he takes his chance. If a friend, or, indeed, if any man asks his opinion whether he should marry her, he ought to advise him against it, without telling why ; because his real opinion is then required. Or, if he has other daughters who know of her frailty, he ought not to keep her in his house. You are to consider the state of life is this : we are to judge of one another's characters as well as we can ; and a man is not bound, in honesty or honour, to tell us the faults of his daughter or of himself. A man who has debauched his friend's daughter, is not obliged to say to every body—' Take care of me ; don't let me into your house without suspicion. I once debauched a friend's daughter : I may debauch yours.' "

At Mr. Thrale's, one evening, Johnson had defended the propriety of recording in biography the weaknesses of human nature. Next morning, while at breakfast, he gave a very earnest recommendation of what he himself practised with the utmost conscientiousness—a strict attention to truth, even in the most minute particulars. " Accustom your children (said he) constantly to this ; if a thing happened at one window, and they, when relating it, say that it happened at another, do not let it pass, but instantly check them ; you do not know where

deviation from truth will end." BOSWELL. "It may come to the door; and when once an account is at all varied in one circumstance, it may by degrees be varied so as to be totally different from what really happened." Their lively hostess, whose fancy was impatient of the rein, fidgeted at this, and ventured to say, "Nay, this is too much. If Mr. Johnson should forbid me to drink tea, I would comply, as I should feel the restraint only twice a day; but little variations in narrative must happen a thousand times a day, if one is not perpetually watching." JOHNSON. "Well, madam, and you *ought* to be perpetually watching. It is more from carelessness about truth, than from intentional lying, that there is so much falsehood in the world."

Boswell adds, "In his review of Dr. Warton's *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*, Johnson has given the following salutary caution upon this subject: 'Nothing but experience could evince the frequency of false information, or enable any man to conceive, that so many groundless reports should be propagated, as every man of eminence may hear of himself. Some men relate what they think, as what they know; some men, of confused memories, and habitual inaccuracy, ascribe to one man what belongs to another; and some talk on, without thought or care. A few men are sufficient to broach falsehoods, which are afterwards innocently diffused by successive relaters.\* Had he lived to read what sir John Hawkins and Mrs. Piozzi have related concerning himself, how much would he have found his observation illustrated!

\* *Literary Magazine*, 1756, p. 37.

He was indeed so much impressed with the prevalence of falsehood, voluntary or unintentional, that I never knew any person, who, upon hearing an extraordinary circumstance told, discovered more of the *incredulus odi*. He would say, with a significant look and decisive tone, 'It is not so. Do not tell this again.' He inculcated upon all his friends the importance of perpetual vigilance against the slightest degrees of falsehood; the effect of which, as sir Joshua Reynolds observed to me, has been, that all who were of his *school* are distinguished for a love of truth and accuracy, which they would not have possessed in the same degree, if they had not been acquainted with Johnson."

He said, "I have been reading Lord Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man*. In treating of severity of punishment, he mentions that of Madame Lapouchin, in Russia, but he does not give it fairly; for I have looked at *Chappe D'Aueroche*, from whom he has taken it: he stops where it is said, that the spectators thought her innocent; and leaves out what follows—that she nevertheless was guilty. Now this is being as culpable as one can conceive—to misrepresent fact in a book; and for what motive? It is like one of those lies, which people tell, one cannot see why. The woman's life was spared: and no punishment was too great for the favourite of an empress, who had conspired to dethrone her mistress." BOSWELL "He was only giving a picture of the lady in her sufferings." JOHNSON. "Nay, don't endeavour to palliate this. Guilt is a principal feature in the picture."

He thus defined the difference between physical and moral truth: "Physical truth is, when you tell

a thing as it actually is : moral truth is, when you tell a thing sincerely and precisely as it appears to you. I say, such a one walked across the street ; if he really did so, I told a physical truth. If I thought so, though I should have been mistaken, I told a moral truth."

Talking of an acquaintance, whose narratives, which abounded in curious and interesting topics, were unhappily found to be very fabulous ; Boswell mentioned lord Mansfield's having said to him, " Suppose we believe one *half* of what he tells.' JOHNSON. " Ay ; but we don't know *which* half to believe. By his lying we lose, not only our reverence for him, but all comfort in his conversation." BOSWELL. " May we not take it as an amusing fiction ?" JOHNSON. " Sir, the misfortune is, that you will insensibly believe as much of it as you incline to believe."

## No. XV.

### RELIGION.

ON the religious observance of the sabbath Johnson observed, " Sunday was a heavy day to me when I was a boy. My mother confined me on that day, and made me read *The Whole Duty of Man*, from a great part of which I could derive no instruction. When, for instance, I had read the chapter on theft, which, from my infancy, I had been taught was wrong, I was no more convinced that theft was wrong than before ; so there was no accession of knowledge. A boy should be introduced to such

books, by having his attention directed to the arrangement, to the style, and other excellences of composition ; that the mind, being thus engaged by an amusing variety of objects, may not grow weary."

He communicated to Boswell the following particulars upon the subject of his religious progress. " I fell into an inattention to religion, or an indifference about it, in my ninth year. The church at Lichfield, in which we had a seat, wanted reparation ; so I was to go and find a seat in other churches ; and, having bad eyes, and being awkward about this, I used to go and read in the fields on Sunday. This habit continued till my fourteenth year ; and still I find a great reluctance to go to church. I then became a sort of lax *talker* against religion, for I did not much *think* against it ; and this lasted till I went to Oxford, where it would not be *suffered*. When at Oxford, I took up Law's *Serious Call to a Holy Life*, expecting to find it a dull book, (as such books generally are), and, perhaps, to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me ; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational inquiry."

To Boswell's great surprise, he asked him to dine with him on Easter-day. He never supposed, that he had a dinner at his house ; for he had not then heard of any one of his friends having been entertained at his table. Johnson told him, " I generally have a meat pie on Sunday : it is baked at a public oven, which is very properly allowed, because one man can attend it ; and thus the advantage is obtained, of not keeping servants from church to dress dinners."

He said, he would not have Sunday kept with rigid severity and gloom, but with gravity and simplicity of behaviour.

He likewise said, he went more frequently to church when there were prayers only, than when there was also a sermon, as the people required more an example for the one than the other; it being much easier for them to hear a sermon, than to fix their minds on prayer.

Boswell talked of preaching, and of the great success which those called Methodists have. JOHNSON. "Sir, it is owing to their expressing themselves in a plain and familiar manner, which is the only way to do good to the common people, and which clergymen of genius and learning ought to do from a principle of duty, when it is suited to their congregations; a practice for which they will be praised by men of sense. To insist against drunkenness as a crime, because it debases reason, the noblest faculty of man, would be of no service to the common people; but to tell them, that they may die in a fit of drunkenness, and show them how dreadful that would be, cannot fail to make a deep impression. Sir, when your Scotch clergy give up their homely manner, religion will soon decay in that country."

To Dr. Maxwell he once observed, that the established clergy did not preach plain enough; and that polished periods and glittering sentences flew over the heads of the common people, without any impression upon their hearts. Something might be necessary, he conceived, to excite the affections of the common people, who were sunk in languor and lethargy; and, therefore, he supposed, that the

new concomitants of methodism might probably produce so desirable an effect. "The mind, like the body," he said, "delights in change and novelty, and, even in religion itself, courts new appearances and modifications. Whatever may be thought of some methodist teachers, I can scarcely doubt the sincerity of a man, who travelled nine hundred miles in a month, and preached twelve times a week; for no adequate reward, merely temporal, could be given for such indefatigable labour."

One Sunday, Boswell told him he had been that morning at a meeting of the people called Quakers, where he heard a woman preach. JOHNSON. "Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs: it is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

"The Christian religion has very strong evidences. It, indeed, appears in some degree strange to reason; but in history we have undoubted facts, against which, in reasoning *a priori*, we have more arguments than we have for them; but then, testimony has great weight, and casts the balance. I would recommend to every man, whose faith is yet unsettled, Grotius, Dr. Pearson, and Dr. Clarke."

Again: "As to the Christian, sir, besides the strong evidence which we have for it, there is a balance in its favour from the number of great men who have been convinced of its truth, after a serious consideration of the question. Grotius was an acute man; a lawyer; a man accustomed to examine evidence; and he was convinced. Grotius was not a recluse—but a man of the world—who certainly had no bias to the side of religion. Sir



Isaac Newton set out an infidel, and came to be a firm believer."

Talking of those who denied the truth of Christianity, he said, "It is always easy to be on the negative side. If a man were now to deny that there is salt upon the table, you could not reduce him to an absurdity. Come, let us try this a little farther. I deny that Canada is taken; and I can support my denial by pretty good arguments. The French are a much more numerous people than we; and it is not likely that they would allow us to take it. 'But the ministry have assured us, in all the formality of the Gazette, that it is taken.' Very true: but the ministry have put us to an enormous expense by the war in America; and it is their interest to persuade us that we have got something for our money. 'But the fact is confirmed by thousands of men who were at the taking of it.' Ay, but these men have still more interest in deceiving us: they don't want that we should think the French have beaten them, but that they have beaten the French. Now, suppose that you should go over, and find that it really is taken—that would only satisfy yourself; for when you come home, we will not believe you: we will say, you have been bribed. Yet, sir, notwithstanding all these plausible objections, we have no doubt that Canada is really ours. Such is the weight of common testimony. How much stronger are the evidences of the Christian religion!"

Dr. Mayo having asked Johnson's opinion of Soame Jenyns's *View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion*—JOHNSON. "I think it a

pretty book ; not very theological indeed ; and there seems to be an affectation of ease and carelessness, as if it were not suitable to his character to be very serious about the matter." BOSWELL.

" He may have intended this to introduce his book the better among genteel people, who might be unwilling to read too grave a treatise. There is a general levity in the age. We have physicians now with bag-wigs ; may we not have airy divines, at least somewhat less solemn in their appearance than they used to be ?" JOHNSON. " Jenyns might mean as you say." BOSWELL. " You should like this book, Mrs. Knowles, as it maintains, as you

*friends* do, that courage is not a Christian virtue."

MRS. KNOWLES. " Yes, indeed, I like him there ; but I cannot agree with him, that friendship is not a Christian virtue." JOHNSON. " Why, madam,

strictly speaking, he is right. All friendship is preferring the interest of a friend, to the neglect, or, perhaps, against the interest of others : so that an old Greek said, ' He that has *friends* has no *friend*.'

Now Christianity recommends universal benevolence—to consider all men as our brethren ; which is contrary to the virtue of friendship, as described by the ancient philosophers. Surely, madam, your sect must approve of this ; for you call all men *friends*."

MRS. KNOWLES. " We are commanded to do good to all men, ' but especially to them who are of the household of faith.' "

JOHNSON. " Well, madam, the household of faith is wide enough."

MRS. KNOWLES. " But, doctor, our Saviour had twelve apostles, yet there was *one* whom he *loved* : John was called ' the disciple whom Jesus loved.' "

JOHNSON (with eyes spark-

ling benignantly.) "Very well, indeed, madam: you have said very well." BOSWELL. "A fine application. Pray, sir, had you ever thought of it?" JOHNSON. "I had not, sir."

From this pleasing subject, he made a sudden transition to one upon which he was a violent aggressor; for, he said: "I am willing to love all mankind, *except an American*;" and his inflammable corruption bursting into horrid fire, he "breathed out threatenings and slaughter;" calling them "rascals, robbers, pirates;" and exclaiming, he'd "burn and destroy them." Miss Seward, looking at him with mild but steady astonishment, said, "Sir, this is an instance, that we are always most violent against those whom we have injured." He was irritated still more by this delicate and keen reproach; and roared out another tremendous volley, which one might fancy could be heard across the Atlantic. During this tempest, Boswell sat in great uneasiness, lamenting his heat of temper; till, by degrees, he diverted his attention to other topics.

One evening, when a young gentleman teased him with an account of the infidelity of his servant, who, he said, would not believe the Scriptures, because he could not read them in the original tongues, and be sure that they were not invented. "Why, foolish fellow," said Johnson, "has he any better authority for almost every thing that he believes?" BOSWELL. "Then the vulgar, sir, never can know they are right, but must submit themselves to the learned." JOHNSON. "To be sure, sir: the vulgar are the children of the state, and must be taught like children." Bos-

**WELL.** "Then, sir, a poor Turk must be a Mahometan, just as a poor Englishman must be a Christian?" **JOHNSON.** "Why, yes, sir; and what then? This now is such stuff as I used to talk to my mother, when I first began to think myself a clever fellow; and she ought to have whipped me for it."

General Paoli asked him what he thought of the spirit of infidelity which was so prevalent. **JOHNSON.** "Sir, this gloom of infidelity, I hope, is only a transient cloud passing through the hemisphere, which will soon be dissipated, and the sun break forth with his usual splendor." **PAOLI.** "You think, then, that they will change their principles like their clothes?" **JOHNSON.** "Why, sir, if they bestow no more thought on principles than on dress, it must be so." **PAOLI.** "A great part of the fashionable infidelity is owing to a desire of showing courage. Men, who have no opportunities of showing it as to things in this life, take death and futurity as objects on which to display it." **JOHNSON.** "That is mighty foolish affectation. Fear is one of the passions of human nature, of which it is impossible to divest it. You remember that the emperor Charles V. when he read upon the tombstone of a Spanish nobleman, 'Here lies one who never knew fear,' wittily said, 'Then he never snuffed a candle with his fingers.'"

Goldsmith having spoken of the difficulty of acquiring literary fame, Johnson observed, "Ah, sir, that should make a man think of securing happiness in another world, which all who try sincerely for it may attain. In comparison of that, how little are

all other things! The belief of immortality is impressed upon all men; and all men act under an impression of it, however they may talk, and though, perhaps, they may be scarcely sensible of it." Boswell said, it appeared to him, that some people had not the least notion of immortality, and he mentioned a distinguished gentleman of their acquaintance. JOHNSON. "Sir, if it were not for the notion of immortality, he would cut a throat to fill his pockets." (When this was related to Beauclerk, who knew much more of the gentleman than they did, he said, in his acid manner, "He would cut a throat to fill his pockets, if it were not for fear of being hanged.")

Dr. Johnson proceeded: "Sir, there is a great cry about infidelity; but there are, in reality, very few infidels. I have heard a person, originally a Quaker, but now, I am afraid, a Deist, say that he did not believe there were in all England above two hundred infidels."

Boswell mentioned Hume's argument against the belief of miracles—that it is more probable that the witnesses to the truth of them are mistaken, or speak falsely, than that the miracles should be true. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, the great difficulty of proving miracles should make us very cautious in believing them. But let us consider: although God has made nature to operate by certain fixed laws, yet it is not unreasonable to think, that he may suspend those laws, in order to establish a system highly advantageous to mankind. Now the Christian religion is a most beneficial system, as it gives us light and certainty where we were

before in darkness and doubt. The miracles which prove it are attested by men who had no interest in deceiving us; but who, on the contrary, were told, that they should suffer persecution; and did actually lay down their lives in confirmation of the truth of the facts which they asserted. Indeed, for some centuries the heathens did not pretend to deny the miracles; but said they were performed by the aid of evil spirits. This is a circumstance of great weight. Then, sir, when we take the proofs derived from prophecies which have been so exactly fulfilled, we have most satisfactory evidence. Supposing a miracle possible, (as to which, in my opinion, there can be no doubt) we have as strong evidence for the miracles in support of Christianity, as the nature of the thing admits."

Mr. Erskine said, that when he was in the island of Minorca, he not only read prayers, but preached two sermons to the regiment. He seemed to object to the passage in Scripture, where we are told, that the angel of the Lord smote in one night forty thousand Assyrians. "Sir," said Johnson, "you should recollect, that there was a supernatural interposition; they were destroyed by pestilence: you are not to suppose, that the angel of the Lord went about, and stabbed each of them with a dagger, or knocked them on the head, man by man."

BOSWELL. "Is there not less religion in the nation now, sir, than there was formerly?" JOHNSON. "I don't know, sir, that there is." BOSWELL. "For instance, there used to be a chaplain in every great family, which we do not find now." JOHNSON. "Neither do you find any of the state

servants which great families used formerly to have. There is a change of modes in the whole department of life."

He much commended Law's Serious Call, which he said was the finest piece of hortatory theology in any language. "Law," said he, "fell latterly into the reveries of Jacob Behmen, whom Law alleged to have been somewhat in the same state with St. Paul, and to have seen *unutterable things*. Were it even so, Jacob would have resembled St. Paul still more, by not attempting to utter them."

He once reproved Dr. Maxwell for saying grace without mention of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; and hoped, in future, he would be more mindful of the apostolical injunction.

Boswell gave him an account of the two parties in the church of Scotland, those for supporting the rights of patrons, independent of the people, and those against it. JOHNSON. "It should be settled one way or other. I cannot wish well to a popular election of the clergy, when I consider, that it occasions such animosities, such unworthy courting of the people, such slanders between the contending parties, and other disadvantages. It is enough to allow the people to remonstrate against the nomination of a minister for solid reasons."

Boswell spoke of the inequality of the livings of the clergy in England, and the scanty provisions of some of the curates. JOHNSON. "Why, yes, sir; but it cannot be helped. You must consider, that the revenues of the clergy are not at the disposal of the state, like the pay of the army, Different men have founded different churches; and some are bet-

ter endowed, some worse. The state cannot interfere, and make an equal division of what has been particularly appropriated. Now when a clergyman has but a small living, or even two small livings, he can afford very little to the curate."

Boswell asked Johnson whether he might go to a consultation with another lawyer upon Sunday, as that appeared to him to be doing work as much in his way, as if an artisan should work on the day appropriated for religious rest. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, when you are of consequence enough to oppose the practice of consulting upon Sunday, you should do it; but you may go now: it is not criminal, though it is not what one should do, who is anxious for the preservation and increase of piety, to which a peculiar observance of Sunday is a great help. The distinction is clear between what is of moral and what is of ritual obligation."

Talking of religious orders, he said, "It is as unreasonable for a man to go into a Carthusian convent for fear of being immoral, as for a man to cut off his hands for fear he should steal. There is, indeed, great resolution in the immediate act of dismembering himself; but when that is once done, he has no longer any merit; for though it is out of his power to steal, yet he may all his life be a thief in his heart. So when a man has once become a Carthusian, he is obliged to continue so, whether he chooses it or not. Their silence too is absurd. We read, in the Gospel, of the apostles being sent to preach, but not to hold their tongues. All severity, that does not tend to increase good, or prevent evil, is idle. I said to the lady abbess of a convent, 'Madam, you are here, not for the love



of virtue, but the fear of vice.' She said, 'She should remember this as long as she lived.' "

Talking of religious orders, he said, " If convents should be allowed at all, they should only be retreats for persons unable to serve the public, or who have served it. It is our first duty to serve society; and after we have done that, we may attend wholly to the salvation of our own souls. A youthful passion for abstracted devotion should not be encouraged."

Mr. Murray praised the ancient philosophers for the candour and good humour with which those of different sects disputed with each other. JOHNSON. " Sir, they disputed with good humour, because they were not in earnest as to religion. Had the ancients been serious in their belief, we should not have had their gods exhibited in the manner we find them represented in the poets. The people would not have suffered it. They disputed with good humour upon their fanciful theories, because they were not interested in the truth of them. When a man has nothing to lose, he may be in good humour with his opponent. Accordingly, you see in Lucian, the Epicurean, who argues only negatively, keeps his temper; the Stoic, who has something positive to preserve, grows angry. Being angry with one who controverts an opinion which you value, is a necessary consequence of the uneasiness which you feel. Every man, who attacks my belief, diminishes in some degree my confidence in it, and therefore makes me uneasy; and I am angry with him who makes me uneasy. Those only who believed in revelation have been angry at having their faith called in question; because they

only had something upon which they could rest as matter of fact." MURRAY. "It seems to me, that we are not angry at a man for controverting an opinion which we believe and value; we rather pity him." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, to be sure, when you wish a man to have that belief, which you think is of infinite advantage, you wish well to him; but your primary consideration is your own quiet. If a madman were to come into this room with a stick in his hand, no doubt we should pity the state of his mind; but our primary consideration would be, to take care of ourselves: we should knock him down first, and pity him afterwards. No, sir, every man will dispute with great good humour upon a subject in which he is not interested. I will dispute very calmly upon the probability of another man's son being hanged; but if a man zealously enforces the probability that my own son will be hanged, I shall certainly not be in a very good humour with him." BOSWELL. "If a man endeavours to convince me, that my wife, whom I love very much, and in whom I place great confidence, is a disagreeable woman, and is even unfaithful to me, I shall be very angry, for he is putting me in fear of being unhappy." MURRAY. "But, sir, truth will always bear an examination." JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, but it is painful to be forced to defend it. Consider, sir, how should you like, though conscious of your innocence, to be tried before a jury for a capital crime, once a week?"

A Quaker having objected to the "observance of days, and months, and years," Johnson answered, "The church does not superstitiously observe days,

merely as days, but as memorials of important facts. Christmas might be kept as well upon one day of the year as another ; but there should be a stated day for commemorating the birth of our Saviour, because there is danger, that what may be done on any day will be neglected."

He said to Boswell, at another time, " Sir, the holydays observed by our church are of great use in religion. There can be no doubt of this in a limited sense ; I mean, if the number of such consecrated portions of time be not too extensive. The excellent Mr. Nelson's Festivals and Fasts, which has, I understand, the greatest sale of any book ever printed in England, except the Bible, is a most valuable help to devotion ; and in addition to it, I would recommend two sermons on the same subject, by Mr. Pott, archdeacon of St. Albans, equally distinguished for piety and elegance. I am sorry to have it to say, that Scotland is the only Christian country, catholic or protestant, where the great events of our religion are not solemnly commemorated by its ecclesiastical establishment, on days set apart for the purpose."

Boswell mentioned an acquaintance of his, a sectary, who was a very religious man, who not only attended regularly on public worship with those of his communion, but made a particular study of the Scriptures, and even wrote a commentary on some parts of them, yet was known to be very licentious in indulging himself with women ; maintaining, that men are to be saved by faith alone, and that the Christian religion had not prescribed any fixed rule for the intercourse between the sexes. JOHN-

son. "Sir, there is no trusting to that crazy piety."

"To find a substitution for violated morality," he said, "is the leading feature in all perversions of religion."

## No. XVI.

## SECTS.

BESIDES tending to refute the notion of Johnson's bigotry, the following very liberal sentiment has the additional value of obviating an objection to our holy religion, founded upon the discordant tenets of Christians themselves: "For my part, sir, I think all Christians, whether papists or protestants, agree in the essential articles, and that their differences are trivial, and rather political than religious."

At another time, he and Boswell talked of the Roman Catholic religion, and how little difference there was in essential matters between ours and it. JOHNSON. "True, sir; all denominations of Christians have really little difference in point of doctrine, though they may differ widely in external forms. There is a prodigious difference between the external form of one of your presbyterian churches in Scotland, and a church in Italy; yet the doctrine taught is essentially the same."

In a literary party at Mr. Dilly's, the subject of toleration was introduced. JOHNSON. "Every society has a right to preserve public peace and order, and therefore has a good right to prohibit the propagation of opinions which have a dangerous tend-

eucy. To say the *magistrate* has this right, is using an inadequate word : it is the *society*, for which the magistrate is agent. He may be morally or theologically wrong in restraining the propagation of opinions which he thinks dangerous, but he is politically right." MAYO. " I am of opinion, sir, that every man is entitled to liberty of conscience in religion ; and that the magistrate cannot restrain that right." JOHNSON. " Sir, I agree with you : every man has a right to liberty of conscience, and with that the magistrate cannot interfere. People confound liberty of thinking with liberty of talking ; nay, with liberty of preaching. Every man has a physical right to think as he pleases ; for it cannot be discovered how he thinks. He has not a moral right ; for he ought to inform himself, and think justly. But, sir, no member of a society has a right to *teach* any doctrine contrary to what the society holds to be true. The magistrate, I say, may be wrong in what he thinks ; but while he thinks himself right, he may and ought to enforce what he thinks." MAYO. " Then, sir, we are to remain always in error, and truth never can prevail ; and the magistrate was right in persecuting the first Christians." JOHNSON. " Sir, the *only* method by which religious truth can be established is by martyrdom. The magistrate has a right to enforce what he thinks ; and he who is conscious of the truth has a right to suffer. I am afraid there is no other way of ascertaining the truth, but by persecution on the one hand, and enduring it on the other." GOLDSMITH. " But how is a man to act, sir ? Though firmly convinced of the truth of his doctrine, may he not think it wrong to expose himself to per-

secution ? Has he a right to do so ? Is it not, as it were, committing voluntary suicide ?" JOHNSON. " Sir, as to voluntary suicide, as you call it, there are twenty thousand men in an army, who will go without scruple to be shot at, and mount a breach, for five-pence a day." GOLDSMITH. " But have they a moral right to do this ?" JOHNSON. " Nay, sir, if you will not take the universal opinion of mankind, I have nothing to say. If mankind cannot defend their own way of thinking, I cannot defend it. Sir, if a man is in doubt whether it would be better for him to expose himself to martyrdom or not, he should not do it : he must be convinced that he has a delegation from Heaven." GOLDSMITH. " I would consider whether there is the greater chance of good or evil upon the whole : if I see a man who has fallen into a well, I would wish to help him out of it ; but if there is a greater probability that he shall pull me in, than that I shall pull him out, I would not attempt it. So were I to go to Turkey, I might wish to convert the grand signor to the Christian faith ; but when I considered that I should probably be put to death without effectuating my purpose in any degree, I should keep myself quiet." JOHNSON. " Sir, you must consider, that we have perfect and imperfect obligations. Perfect obligations, which are generally not to do something, are clear and positive ; as, ' thou shalt not kill ;' but charity, for instance, is not definable by limits. It is a duty to give to the poor ; but no man can say how much another should give to the poor, or when a man has given too little to save his soul. In the same manner, it is a duty to instruct the ignorant, and, of consequence, to convert infi-

dels to Christianity; but no man, in the common course of things, is obliged to carry this to such a degree, as to incur the danger of martyrdom; as no man is obliged to strip himself to the shirt, in order to give charity. I have said, that a man must be persuaded that he has a particular delegation from Heaven." GOLDSMITH. "How is this to be known? Our first reformers, who were burnt for not believing bread and wine to be Christ"—JOHNSON. (interrupting him,) "Sir, they were not burnt for not believing bread and wine to be Christ, but for insulting those who did believe it: and, sir, when the first reformers began, they did not intend to be martyred; as many of them ran away as could." BOSWELL. "But, sir, there was your countryman Elwal, who, you told me, challenged king George, with his black-guards, and his red-guards." JOHNSON. "My countryman Elwal, sir, should have been put in the stocks; a proper pulpit for him; and he'd have had a numerous audience. A man who preaches in the stocks will always have hearers enough." BOSWELL. "But Elwal thought himself in the right." JOHNSON. "We are not providing for mad people; there are places for them in the neighbourhood." (meaning Moorfields.) MAYO. "But, sir, is it not very hard, that I should not be allowed to teach my children what I really believe to be the truth?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, you might contrive to teach your children *extra scandalum*; but, sir, the magistrate, if he knows it, has a right to restrain you. Suppose you teach your children to be thieves?" MAYO. "This is making a joke of the subject." JOHNSON. "Nay, sir, take it thus:—that you teach them the community of goods;

for which there are as many plausible arguments as for most erroneous doctrines. You teach them, that all things at first were in common, and that no man had a right to any thing, but as he laid his hands upon it ; and that this still is, or ought to be, the rule amongst mankind. Here, sir, you sap a great principle in society,—property. And don't you think the magistrate would have a right to prevent you ? Or, suppose you should teach your children the notion of the Adamites, and they should run naked into the streets ; would not the magistrate have a right to flog 'em into their doublets ?" MAYO. " I think the magistrate has no right to interfere, till there is some overt act." BOSWELL. " So, sir, though he sees an enemy to the state charging a blunderbuss, he is not to interfere till it is fired off !" MAYO. " He must be sure of its direction against the state." JOHNSON. " The magistrate is to judge of that. He has no right to restrain your thinking, because the evil centres in yourself. If a man were sitting at this table, and chopping off his fingers, the magistrate, as guardian of the community, has no authority to restrain him, however he might do it from kindness as a parent : though, indeed, upon more consideration, I think he may ; as it is probable, that he who is chopping off his own fingers, may soon proceed to chop off those of other people. If I think it right to steal Mr. Dilly's plate, I am a bad man ; but he can say nothing to me. If I make an open declaration that I think so, he will keep me out of his house : if I put forth my hand, I shall be sent to Newgate. This is the gradation of thinking, preaching, and acting : if a man thinks erroneously, he



may keep his thoughts to himself, and nobody will trouble him ; if he preaches erroneous doctrine, society may expel him ; if he acts in consequence of it, the law takes place, and he is hanged." MAYO. " But, sir, ought not Christians to have liberty of conscience ?" JOHNSON. " I have already told you so, sir : you are coming back to where you were." BOSWELL. " Dr. Mayo is always taking a return post-chaise, and going the stage over again : he has it at half price." JOHNSON. " Dr. Mayo, like other champions for unlimited toleration, has got a set of words. Sir, it is no matter, politically, whether the magistrate be right or wrong. Suppose a club were to be formed, to drink confusion to king George the Third, and a happy restoration to Charles the Third ; this would be very bad with respect to the state ; but every member of that club must either conform to its rules, or be turned out of it. Old Baxter, I remember, maintains, that the magistrate should ' tolerate all things that are tolerable.' This is no good definition of toleration upon any principle ; but it shows, that he thought some things were not tolerable." TOP-LADY. " Sir, you have untwisted this difficult subject with great dexterity."

Dr. Mayo's calm temper and steady perseverance rendered him an admirable subject for the exercise of Dr. Johnson's powerful abilities. He never flinched ; but, after reiterated blows, remained seemingly unmoved as at the first. The scintillations of Johnson's genius flashed every time he was struck, without his receiving any injury. Hence he obtained the epithet of *The Literary Anvil*.

Boswell mentioned Elwal the heretic, whose

trial sir John Pringle had given him to read. JOHNSON. "Sir, Mr. Elwal was, I think, an ironmonger at Wolverhampton; and he had a mind to make himself famous, by being the founder of a new sect, which he wished much should be called the *Elwal-lans*. He held, that every thing in the Old Testament that was not typical, was to be of perpetual observance; and so he wore a ribband in the plaits of his coat, and he also wore a beard. I remember, I had the honour of dining in company with Mr. Elwal. There was one Barter, a miller, who wrote against him; and you had the controversy between Mr. Elwal and Mr. Barter. To try to make himself distinguished, he wrote a letter to king George the Second, challenging him to dispute with him; in which he said, 'George, if you be afraid to come by yourself, to dispute with a poor old man, you may bring a thousand of your *black-guards* with you; and if you should still be afraid, you may bring a thousand of your *red-guards*.' The letter had something of the impudence of Junius to our present king. But the men of Wolverhampton were not so inflammable as the common-council of London; so Mr. Elwal failed in his scheme of making himself a man of great consequence."

Boswell said to him, how common it was in the world to tell absurd stories of him, and to ascribe to him very strange sayings. JOHNSON. "What do they make me say, sir?" BOSWELL. "Why, sir, as an instance very strange indeed, (laughing heartily as he spoke,) David Hume told me, you said that you would stand before a battery of cannon to restore the convocation to its full powers." Little did Boswell apprehend that he had actually

said this : but he was soon convinced of his error ; for, with a determined look, he thundered out, " And would I not, sir ? Shall the presbyteriau *kirk* of Scotland have its general assembly, and the church of England be denied its convocation ? " He was walking up and down the room while Boswell told him the anecdote ; but when he uttered this explosion of high-church zeal, he had come close to his chair, and his eyes flashed with indignation.

Speaking of the petition to parliament for removing the subscription to the thirty-nine articles ; —JOHNSON. " It was thrown out, sir. They talk of not making boys at the university subscribe to what they do not understand ; but they ought to consider that our universities were founded to bring up members for the church of England, and we must not supply our enemies with arms from our arsenal. No, sir ; the meaning of subscribing is, not that they fully understand all the articles, but that they will adhere to the church of England. Now, take it in this way, and suppose that they should only subscribe their adherence to the church of England : there would be still the same difficulty ; for still the young men would be subscribing to what they do not understand : for, if you should ask them, what do you mean by the church of England ? Do you know in what it differs from the Presbyterian church ?—from the Romish church ?—from the Greek church ?—from the Coptic church ?—they could not tell you. So, sir, it comes to the same thing." BOSWELL. " But would it not be sufficient to subscribe the Bible ? " JOHNSON. " Why no, sir ; for all sects will subscribe the Bible : nay, the Mahometans will subscribe the Bible ; for the

Mahometans acknowledge Jesus Christ as well as Moses, but maintain that God sent Mahomet as a still greater prophet than either."

Boswell had hired a Bohemian as his servant while he remained in London, and, being much pleased with him, he asked Dr. Johnson whether his being a Roman Catholic should prevent his taking him with him to Scotland. JOHNSON. "Why no, sir; if *he* has no objection, you can have none."

Boswell. "So, sir, you are no great enemy to the Roman Catholic religion?" JOHNSON. "No more, sir, than to the Presbyterian religion." Boswell.

"You are joking." JOHNSON. "No, sir, I really think so: nay, sir, of the two, I prefer the popish."

Boswell. "How so, sir?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, the presbyterians have no church, no apostolical ordination." Boswell. "And do you think that absolutely essential, sir?" JOHNSON. "Why,

sir, as it was an apostolical institution, I think it is dangerous to be without it: and, sir, the presbyterians have no public worship: they have no form of prayer in which they know they are to join. They go to hear a man pray, and are to judge whether they will join with him." Boswell. "But,

sir, their doctrine is the same with that of the church of England: their confession of faith, and the thirty-nine articles, contain the same points, even the doctrine of predestination." JOHNSON.

"Why yes, sir; predestination was a part of the clamour of the times, so it is mentioned in our articles, but with as little positiveness as could be."

Boswell. "Is it necessary, sir, to believe all the thirty-nine articles?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir; that is a question which has been much agitated."

Some have thought it necessary that they should all be believed; others have considered them to be only articles of peace, that is to say, you are not to preach against them." BOSWELL. "It appears to me, sir, that predestination, or what is equivalent to it, cannot be avoided, if we hold an universal prescience in the Deity." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, does not God every day see things going on without preventing them?" BOSWELL. "True, sir, but if a thing be *certainly* foreseen, it must be fixed, and cannot happen otherwise; and if we apply this consideration to the human mind, there is no free will, nor do I see how prayer can be of any avail." He mentioned Dr. Clarke and bishop Bramhall, on Liberty and Necessity, and bid Boswell read South's Sermons on Prayer; but avoided the question which has excruciated philosophers and divines beyond any other. Boswell did not press it further, when he perceived that he was displeased, and shrunk from any abridgment of an attribute usually ascribed to the Divinity, however irreconcilable in its full extent with the grand system of moral government. His supposed orthodoxy here cramped the vigorous powers of his understanding. He was confined by a chain, which early imagination and long habit made him think massy and strong, but which, had he ventured to try, he could at once have snapped asunder.

Boswell proceeded: "What do you think, sir, of purgatory, as believed by the Roman Catholics?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, it is a very harmless doctrine. They are of opinion, that the generality of mankind are neither so obstinately wicked as to deserve everlasting punishment, nor so good as to

merit being admitted into the society of blessed spirits; and therefore, that God is graciously pleased to allow of a middle state, where they may be purified by certain degrees of suffering. You see, sir, there is nothing unreasonable in this." BOSWELL.

But then, sir, their masses for the dead?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, if it be once established that there are souls in purgatory, it is as proper to pray for *them*, as for our brethren of mankind, who are yet in this life." BOSWELL. "'The idolatry of the mass?'" JOHNSON.

"Sir, there is no idolatry in the mass: they believe God to be there, and they adore him." BOSWELL. "The worship of saints?"

JOHNSON. "Sir, they do not worship saints; they invoke them; they only ask their prayers. I am talking all this time of the *doctrines* of the church of Rome: I grant you, that in *practice*, purgatory is made a lucrative imposition, and that the people do become idolatrous, as they recommend themselves to the tutelary protection of particular saints. I think their giving the sacrament only in one kind is criminal, because it is contrary to the express institution of Christ; and I wonder how the council of Trent admitted it." BOSWELL. "Confession?"

JOHNSON. "Why, I don't know but that is a good thing: the Scripture says, 'Confess your faults one to another'—and the priests confess as well as the laity. Then it must be considered, that their absolution is only upon repentance, and often upon penance also. You think your sins may be forgiven without penance, upon repentance alone."

Boswell adds, "I thus ventured to mention all the common objections against the Roman Catholic church, that I might hear so great a man upon

them. What he said is here accurately recorded; but, it is not improbable, that if one had taken the other side, he might have reasoned differently.

"I must however mention, that he had a respect for '*the old religion*,' as the mild Melancthon called that of the Roman Catholic church, even while he was exerting himself for its reformation in some particulars. Sir William Scott informs me, that he heard Johnson say, 'A man who is converted from protestantism to popery, may be sincere; he parts with nothing; he is only superadding to what he already had: but a convert from popery to protestantism gives up so much of what he has held as sacred as any thing that he retains; there is so much *laceration of mind* in such a conversion—that it can hardly be sincere and lasting.' The truth of this reflection may be confirmed by many and eminent instances, some of which will occur to most of my readers."

On another occasion, the worshipping of saints was the subject of conversation. TOPLADY. "Does not their invocation of saints suppose omnipresence in the saints?" JOHNSON. "No, sir; it supposes only pluri-presence; and when spirits are divested of matter, it seems probable that they should see with more extent than when in an embodied state. There is, therefore, no approach to an invasion of any of the divine attributes in the invocation of saints: but I think it is will-worship and presumption. I see no command for it, and therefore think it is safer not to practise it."

On Good Friday, after having attended the morning service at St. Clement's church, Boswell walked home with Johnson. They talked of the Roman Ca-

tholic religion. JOHNSON. "In the barbarous ages, sir, priests and people were equally deceived; but afterwards, there were gross corruptions introduced by the clergy; such as indulgences to priests to have concubines, and the worship of images, not, indeed, inculcated, but knowingly permitted." He strongly censured the licensed stews at Rome. BOSWELL.

"So then, sir, you would allow of no irregular intercourse whatever between the sexes?" JOHNSON.

"To be sure I would not, sir: I would punish it much more than it is done, and so restrain it. In all countries there has been fornication, as in all countries there has been theft; but there may be more or less of the one as well as of the other, in proportion to the force of law. All men will naturally commit fornication, as all men will naturally steal: and, sir, it is very absurd to argue, as has been often done, that prostitutes are necessary to prevent the violent effects of appetite from violating the decent order of life; nay, should be permitted, in order to preserve the chastity of our wives and daughters. Depend upon it, sir, severe laws, steadily enforced, would be sufficient against those evils, and would promote marriage."

Boswell talked of the recent expulsion of six students from the university of Oxford, who were methodists, and would not desist from publicly praying and exhorting. JOHNSON. "Sir, that expulsion was extremely just and proper. What have they to do at an university, who are not willing to be taught, but will presume to teach? Where is religion to be learnt but at an university? Sir, they were examined, and found to be mighty ignorant fellows." BOSWELL. "But, was it not hard, sir, to expel them?"



for I am told they were good beings." JOHNSON. "I believe they might be good beings, but they were not fit to be in the university of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field; but we turn her out of a garden." Lord Elbank used to repeat this as an illustration uncommonly happy.

## No. XVII.

## FREE WILL.

DR. MAYO, (addressing Dr. Johnson) "Pray, sir, have you read Edwards, of New England, on Grace?"

JOHNSON. "No, sir." BOSWELL. "It puzzled me so much as to the freedom of the human will, by stating, with wonderful acute ingenuity, our being actuated by a series of motives which we cannot resist, that the only relief I had was to forget it."

MAYO. "But he makes the proper distinction between moral and physical necessity." BOSWELL.

"Alas, sir, they come both to the same thing. You may be bound as hard by chains when covered by leather, as when the iron appears. The argument for the moral necessity of human actions is always, I observe, fortified by supposing universal prescience to be one of the attributes of the Deity."

JOHNSON. "You are surer that you are free, than you are of prescience; you are surer that you can lift up your finger or not as you please, than you are of any conclusion from a deduction of reasoning. But let us consider a little the objection from prescience. It is certain I am either to go home to-night or not: that does not prevent my freedom."

BOSWELL. "That it is certain you are *either* to go home or not, does not prevent your freedom; because the liberty of choice between the two is compatible with that certainty. But if *one* of these events be certain *now*, you have no *future* power of volition. If it be certain you are to go home to-night, you *must* go home." JOHNSON. "If I am well acquainted with a man, I can judge, with great probability, how he will act in any case, without his being restrained by my judging. God may have this probability increased to certainty." BOSWELL. "When it is increased to *certainty*, freedom ceases; because that cannot be certainly known which is not certain at the time: but if it be certain at the time, it is a contradiction in terms to maintain that there can be afterwards any *contingency* dependent upon the exercise of the will, or any thing else." JOHNSON. "All theory is against the freedom of the will; all experience for it."

No. XVIII.

SUPERSTITION.

BOSWELL introduced the subject of second sight, and other mysterious manifestations; the fulfilment of which, he suggested, might happen by chance. JOHNSON. "Yes, sir, but they have happened so often, that mankind have agreed to think them not fortuitous."

Mrs. Williams told a story of second sight, which happened in Wales, where she was born.—He listened to it very attentively, and said he should be

glad to have some instances of that faculty well authenticated. His elevated wish for more and more evidence for spirit, in opposition to the grovelling belief of materialism, led him to a love of such mysterious disquisitions. He again justly observed, that we could have no certainty of the truth of supernatural appearances, unless something was told us which we could not know by ordinary means, or something done which could not be done but by supernatural power : that Pharaoh, in reason and justice, required such evidence from Moses ; nay, that our Saviour said, " If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin." He had said in the morning, that Macaulay's History of St. Kilda was very well written, except some foppery about liberty and slavery. Boswell mentioned to him, that Macaulay told him, he was advised to leave out of his book the wonderful story, that upon the approach of a stranger all the inhabitants catch cold ; but that it had been so well authenticated, he determined to retain it. JOHNSON. " Sir, to leave things out of a book, merely because people tell you they will not be believed, is meanness. Macaulay acted with more magnanimity."

On a former occasion, Johnson had said, " Macaulay, who writes the account of St. Kilda, set out with a prejudice against prejudice, and wanted to be a smart modern thinker ; and yet he affirms for a truth, that when a ship arrives there, all the inhabitants are seized with a cold."

Dr. John Campbell, the celebrated writer, took a great deal of pains to ascertain this fact, and attempted to account for it on physical principles,

from the effect of effluvia from human bodies. A lady of Norfolk, in a letter to Dr. Burney, mentions the following solution of it : " Now for the explication of this seeming mystery, which is so very obvious, as, for that reason, to have escaped the penetration of Dr. Johnson and his friend, as well as that of the author. Reading the book with my ingenious friend, the late reverend Mr. Christian, of Docking—after ruminating a little, ' The cause,' says he, ' is a natural one. The situation of St. Kilda renders a north-east wind indispensably necessary before a stranger can land. The wind, not the stranger, occasions an epidemic cold !' If I am not mistaken, Mr. Macaulay is dead ; if living, this solution might please him, as I hope it will Mr. Boswell, in return for the many agreeable hours his works have afforded us."

Of John Wesley, he said, " He can talk well on any subject." BOSWELL. " Pray, sir, what has he made of his story of a ghost ?" JOHNSON. " Why, sir, he believes it ; but not on sufficient authority. He did not take time enough to examine the girl. It was at Newcastle, where the ghost was said to have appeared to a young woman several times, mentioning something about the right to an old house, advising application to be made to an attorney, which was done ; and, at the same time, saying the attorney would do nothing, which proved to be the fact. ' This,' says John, ' is a proof that a ghost knows our thoughts.' Now (laughing) it is not necessary to know our thoughts, to tell that an attorney will sometimes do nothing. Charles Wesley, who is a more stationary man, does not believe the story. I am sorry that John did not take

more pains to inquire into the evidence for it." Miss SEWARD, (with an incredulous smile) "What, sir! about a ghost?" JOHNSON, (with solemn vehemence) "Yes, madam: this is a question which, after five thousand years, is yet undecided; a question, whether in theology or philosophy, one of the most important that can come before the human understanding."

Talking of belief in ghosts, he said, "Sir, I make a distinction between what a man may experience by the mere strength of his imagination, and what imagination cannot possibly produce. Thus, suppose that I should think that I saw a form, and heard a voice cry, 'Johnson, you are a very wicked fellow; and, unless you repent, you will certainly be punished;' my own unworthiness is so deeply impressed upon my mind, that I might *imagine* I thus saw and heard; and therefore I should not believe that an external communication had been made to me. But if a form should appear, and a voice should tell me, that a particular man had died at a particular place, and a particular hour—a fact which I had no apprehension of, nor any means of knowing; and this fact, with all its circumstances, should afterwards be unquestionably proved—I should, in this case, be persuaded that I had supernatural intelligence imparted to me." Boswell adds—"Here it is proper, once for all, to give a true and fair statement of Johnson's way of thinking upon the question, whether departed spirits are ever permitted to appear in this world, or in any way to operate upon human life. He has been ignorantly misrepresented as weakly credulous upon that subject; and therefore, though I feel an inclination to disdain and

treat with silent contempt so foolish a notion concerning my illustrious friend; yet, as I find it has gained ground, it is necessary to refute it. The real fact then is, that Johnson had a very philosophical mind, and such a rational respect for testimony, as to make him submit his understanding to what was authentically proved, though he could not comprehend why it was so. Being thus disposed, he was willing to inquire into the truth of any relation of supernatural agency; a general belief of which has prevailed in all nations and ages. But so far was he from being the dupe of implicit faith, that he examined the matter with a jealous attention, and no man was more ready to refute its falsehood when he had discovered it. Churchill, in his poem entitled *The Ghost*, availed himself of the absurd credulity imputed to Johnson, and drew a caricature of him under the name of Pomposo; representing him as one of the believers of the story of a ghost in Cock-lane, which, in the year 1762, had gained very general credit in London. Many of my readers, I am convinced, are to this hour under an impression, that Johnson was thus foolishly deceived. It will therefore surprise them a good deal, when they are informed, upon undoubted authority, that Johnson was one of those by whom the imposture was detected. The story had become so popular, that he thought it should be investigated; and in this research he was assisted by the reverend Dr. Douglas, afterwards bishop of Salisbury, the great detector of impostures; who informs me, that after the gentlemen who went and examined into the evidence, were satisfied of its falsity, Johnson wrote, in their presence,

an account of it, which was published in the newspapers and Gentleman's Magazine, and undeceived the world.\*

\* The account was as follows: "On the night of the 1st of February, many gentlemen, eminent for their rank and character, were, by the invitation of the reverend Mr. Aldrich, of Clerkenwell, assembled at his house, for the examination of the noises supposed to be made by a departed spirit, for the detection of some enormous crime.

"About ten at night the gentlemen met in the chamber in which the girl, supposed to be disturbed by a spirit, had, with proper caution, been put to bed by several ladies. They sat rather more than an hour, and hearing nothing, went down stairs, when they interrogated the father of the girl, who denied, in the strongest terms, any knowledge or belief of fraud.

"The supposed spirit had before publicly promised, by an affirmative knock, that it would attend one of the gentlemen into the vault under the church of St. John Clerkenwell, where the body is deposited, and give a token of her presence there, by a knock upon her coffin; it was therefore determined to make this trial of the existence or veracity of the supposed spirit.

"While they were inquiring and deliberating, they were summoned into the girl's chamber by some ladies who were near her bed, and who had heard knocks and scratches. When the gentlemen entered, the girl declared that she felt the spirit like a mouse upon her back, and was required to hold her hands out of bed. From that time, though the spirit was very solemnly required to manifest its existence by appearance, by impression on the hand or body of any present, by scratches, knocks, or any other agency, no evidence of any preternatural power was exhibited.

"The spirit was then very seriously advertised, that the person to whom the promise was made of striking the coffin, was then about to visit the vault, and that the performance of the promise was then claimed. The company, at one o'clock, went into the church, and the gentleman, to

BOSWELL. "I do not know whether there are any well-attested stories of the appearance of ghosts. You know there is a famous story of the appearance of Mrs. Veal, prefixed to Drelincourt on Death."

JOHNSON. "I believe, sir, that is given up: I believe the woman declared, upon her death-bed, that it was a lie."\*

BOSWELL. "This objection is made against the truth of ghosts appearing; that if they are in a state of happiness, it would be a punishment to them to return to this world; and if they are in a state of misery, it would be giving them a respite." JOHNSON. "Why, sir, as the happiness or misery of embodied spirits does not depend upon place, but is intellectual, we cannot say they are less happy or less miserable by appearing upon earth."

Another time, the subject of ghosts being introduced, Johnson told Boswell of a friend of his, an honest man, and a man of sense, having asserted

whom the promise was made, went with another into the vault. The spirit was solemnly required to perform its promise, but nothing more than silence ensued: the person, supposed to be accused by the spirit, then went down with several others, but no effect was perceived. Upon their return, they examined the girl, but could draw no confession from her. Between two and three, she desired, and was permitted to go home with her father.

"It is, therefore, the opinion of the whole assembly, that the child has some art of making or counterfeiting a particular noise, and that there is no agency of any higher cause."

\* This fiction is known to be invented by Daniel Defoe, and was added to the second edition of the English translation of Drelincourt's work, (which was originally written in French,) to make it sell. The first edition had it not.—*Malone.*



to him, that he had seen an apparition. Goldsmith said, he was assured by his brother, the reverend Mr. Goldsmith, that he also had seen one. General Oglethorpe related, that Prendergast, an officer in the duke of Marlborough's army, had mentioned to many of his friends, that he should die on a particular day: that upon that day a battle took place with the French; that after it was over, and Prendergast was still alive, his brother officers, while they were yet in the field, jestingly asked him where was his prophecy now? Prendergast gravely answered, "I shall die notwithstanding what you see." Soon afterwards, there came a shot from a French battery, to which the orders for a cessation of arms had not reached, and he was killed upon the spot. Colonel Cecil, who took possession of his effects, found in his pocket-book the following solemn entry:

[Here the date.] "Dreamt—or———\*  
sir John Friend meets me:" (here the very day on which he was killed was mentioned.) Prendergast had been convicted with sir John, who was executed for high treason. General Oglethorpe said, he was with colonel Cecil, when Pope came and inquired into the truth of this story, which made a great noise at the time, and was then confirmed by the colonel.

Johnson had said on a former occasion, he knew one friend, who was an honest man, and a sensible

\* Here was a blank, which may be filled up thus:—*was told by an apparition:*"—the writer being probably uncertain whether he was asleep or awake, when his mind was impressed with the solemn presentiment, with which the fact afterwards happened so wonderfully to correspond.

man, who told him he had seen a ghost—old Mr. Edward Cave, the printer, at St. John's Gate. He said, Mr. Cave did not like to talk of it, and seemed to be in great horror whenever it was mentioned. BOSWELL. "Pray, sir, what did he say was the appearance?" JOHNSON. "Why, sir, something of a shadowy being."

Boswell mentioned witches, and asked him what they properly meant. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, they properly mean those who make use of the aid of evil spirits." BOSWELL. "There is, no doubt, sir, a general report and belief of their having existed." JOHNSON. "You have not only the general report and belief, but you have many voluntary solemn confessions." He did not affirm any thing positively upon a subject, which it is the fashion of the times to laugh at as a matter of absurd credulity: he only seemed willing, as a candid inquirer after truth, however strange and inexplicable, to show that he understood what might be urged for it.

## No. XIX.

## FUTURE STATE.—DEATH.

BOSWELL, one night, finding him in a very good humour, ventured to lead him to the subject of our situation in a future state, having much curiosity to know his notions on that point. JOHNSON. "Why, sir, the happiness of an unembodied spirit will consist in a consciousness of the favour of God, in the contemplation of truth, and in the possession of felicitating ideas." BOSWELL. "But, sir, is

there any harm in forming to ourselves conjectures as to the particulars of our happiness, though the Scripture has said but very little on the subject ? ' We know not what we shall be.' " JOHNSON. " Sir, there is no harm. What philosophy suggests to us on this topic is probable ; what Scripture tells us is certain. Dr. Henry More has carried it as far as philosophy can. You may buy both his theological and philosophical works in two volumes folio, for about eight shillings." BOSWELL. " One of the most pleasing thoughts is, that we shall see our friends again." JOHNSON. " Yes, sir ; but you must consider, that when we are become purely rational, many of our friendships will be cut off. Many friendships are formed by a community of sensual pleasures : all these will be cut off. We form many friendships with bad men, because they have agreeable qualities, and they can be useful to us ; but, after death, they can no longer be of use to us. We form many friendships by mistake, imagining people to be different from what they really are : after death, we shall see every one in a true light. Then, sir, they talk of our meeting our relations : but then all relationship is dissolved ; and we shall have no regard for one person more than another, but for their real value. However, we shall either have the satisfaction of meeting our friends, or be satisfied without meeting them." BOSWELL. " Yet, sir, we see in Scripture, that Dives still retained an anxious concern about his brethren." JOHNSON. " Why, sir, we must either suppose that passage to be metaphorical, or hold, with many divines, and all the Purgatorians, that departed souls do not all at once arrive at the ut-

most perfection of which they are capable." BOSWELL. "I think, sir, that is a very rational supposition." JOHNSON. "Why, yes, sir; but we do not know it is a true one: there is no harm in believing it; but you must not compel others to make it an article of faith; for it is not revealed."

BOSWELL. "Do you think, sir, it is wrong in a man who holds the doctrine of purgatory, to pray for the souls of his deceased friends?" JOHNSON.

"Why no, sir." BOSWELL. "I have been told, that in the liturgy of the episcopal church of Scotland, there was a form of prayer for the dead."

JOHNSON. "Sir, it is not in the liturgy which Laud framed for the episcopal church of Scotland: if there is a liturgy older than that, I should be glad to see it." BOSWELL. "As to our employment in

a future state, the sacred writings say little: the Revelation, however, of St. John gives us many ideas, and particularly mentions music." JOHNSON.

"Why, sir, ideas must be given you by means of something which you know: and as to music, there are some philosophers and divines who have maintained, that we shall not be spiritualized to such a degree, but that something of matter, very much refined, will remain: in that case, music may make a part of our future felicity."

In a mixed company, Boswell expressed a horror at the thought of death. MRS. KNOWLES. "Nay, thou shouldst not have a horror for what is the gate of life." JOHNSON (standing upon the hearth rolling about, with a serious, solemn, and somewhat gloomy air.) "No rational man can die without uneasy apprehension." MRS. KNOWLES. "The Scriptures tell us, 'The righteous shall have hope

in his death.' " JOHNSON. " Yes, madam ; that is, he shall not have despair. But, consider, his hope of salvation must be founded on the terms on which it is promised that the mediation of our Saviour shall be applied to us—namely, obedience ; and where obedience has failed, then, as suppletory to it, repentance. But what man can say, that his obedience has been such, as he would approve of in another, or even in himself, upon close examination ; or that his repentance has not been such as to require being repented of ? No man can be sure that his obedience and repentance will obtain salvation."

MRS. KNOWLES. " But divine intimation of acceptance may be made to the soul." JOHNSON. " Madam, it may ; but I should not think the better of a man, who should tell me, on his death-bed, he was sure of salvation. A man cannot be sure himself, that he has divine intimation of acceptance ; much less can he make others sure that he has it." Bos-

WELL. " Then, sir, we must be contented to acknowledge, that death is a terrible thing." JOHNSON.

" Yes, sir : I have made no approaches to a state, which can look on it as not terrible." MRS.

KNOWLES (seeming to enjoy a pleasing serenity in the persuasion of benignant divine light.) " Does not St. Paul say, ' I have fought the good fight of faith, I have finished my course ; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of life ? ' " JOHNSON.

" Yes, madam ; but here was a man inspired, a man who had been converted by supernatural interposition."

BOSWELL. " In prospect death is dreadful ; but in fact we find that people die easy." JOHNSON.

" Why, sir, most people have not *thought* much of the matter, so cannot *say* much ; and it is supposed

they die 'easy. Few believe it certain they are then to die; and those who do, set themselves to behave with resolution, as a man does who is going to be hanged—he is not the less unwilling to be hanged." MISS SEWARD. "There is one mode of the fear of death, which is certainly absurd; and that is the dread of annihilation, which is only a pleasing sleep without a dream." JOHNSON. "It is neither pleasing, nor sleep: it is nothing. Now mere existence is so much better than nothing, that one would rather exist, even in pain, than not exist." BOSWELL. "If annihilation be nothing, then existing in pain is not a comparative state, but is a positive evil, which I cannot think we should choose. I must be allowed to differ here; and it would lessen the hope of a future state, founded on the argument, that the Supreme Being, who is good as he is great, will hereafter compensate for our present sufferings in this life: for if existence, such as we have it here, be comparatively a good, we have no reason to complain, though no more of it should be given to us. But if our only state of existence were in this world, then we might, with some reason, complain that we are so dissatisfied with our enjoyments, compared with our desires." JOHNSON. "The lady confounds annihilation, which is nothing, with the apprehension of it, which is dreadful: it is in the apprehension of it, that the horror of annihilation consists."

Johnson, with that native fortitude, which, amidst all his bodily distress and mental sufferings, never forsook him, asked Dr. Brocklesby, as a man in whom he had confidence, to tell him plainly whether he would recover. "Give me," said he, "a direct answer." The doctor, having first asked him

if he could bear the whole truth, which way soever it might lead, and being answered, that he could, declared, that, in his opinion, he could not recover without a miracle. "Then," said Johnson, "I will take no more physic, not even my opiates; for I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded." In this resolution he persevered, and, at the same time, used only the weakest kind of sustenance. Being pressed by Mr. Windham to take somewhat more generous nourishment, lest too low a diet should have the very effect which he dreaded, by debilitating his mind, he said, "I will take any thing but inebriating sustenance."

As he opened a note which his servant brought to him, he said, "An odd thought strikes me:—we shall receive no letters in the grave."

While Johnson and Boswell were at Lichfield, as they sat at breakfast one day, the doctor received a letter by the post, which seemed to agitate him very much. When he had read it, he exclaimed, "One of the most dreadful things that has happened in my time." The phrase, *my time*, like the word *age*, is usually understood to refer to an event of a public or general nature. Boswell imagined something like an assassination of the king—like a gunpowder plot carried into execution—or like another fire of London. When asked, "What is it, sir?" he answered, "Mr. Thrale has lost his only son!" This was, no doubt, a very great affliction to Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, which their friends would consider accordingly; but from the manner in which the intelligence of it was communicated by Johnson, it appeared for the moment to be comparatively small. Boswell, however, soon felt a sincere concern, and was curious to observe how Dr. John-

son would be affected. He said, "This is a total extinction to their family, as much as if they were sold into captivity." Upon mentioning, that Mr. Thrale had daughters, who might inherit his wealth—"Daughters!" said Johnson, warmly, "he'll no more value his daughters than ——" Boswell was going to speak. "Sir," said he, "don't you know how you yourself think? Sir, he wishes to propagate his name." In short, male succession was strong in his mind, even where there was no name, no family, of any long standing. Boswell said, it was lucky he was not present when this misfortune happened. JOHNSON. "It is lucky for *me*: people in distress never think that *you* feel enough." BOSWELL. "And, sir, they will have the hope of seeing you, which will be a relief, in the mean time; and when you get to them, the pain will be so far abated, that they will be capable of being consoled by you, which, in the first violence of it, I believe, ~~would~~ not be the case." JOHNSON. "No, sir; violent pain of mind, like violent pain of body, *must* be severely felt." BOSWELL. "I own, sir, I have not so much feeling for the distress of others, as some people have, or pretend to have; but I know this, that I would do all in my power to relieve them." JOHNSON. "Sir, it is affectation to pretend to feel the distress of others as much as they do themselves: it is equally so, as if one should pretend to feel as much pain while a friend's leg is cutting off, as he does. No, sir; you have expressed the rational and just nature of sympathy. I would have gone to the extremity of the earth to have preserved this boy."

He was soon quite calm. The letter was from Mr. Thrale's clerk, and concluded, "I need not say



how much they wish to see you in London." He said, "We shall hasten back to Taylor's."

Boswell adds, "After dinner, Dr. Johnson wrote a letter to Mrs. Thrale, on the death of her son. I said, it would be very distressing to Thrale, but she would soon forget it, as she had so many things to think of. JOHNSON. 'No, sir, Thrale will forget it first: *she* has many things that *she may* think of; *he* has many things that *he must* think of.' This was a very just remark upon the different effects of those light pursuits, which occupy a vacant and easy mind, and those serious engagements, which arrest attention, and keep us from brooding over grief.

"In the evening, we went to the Town-hall, which was converted into a temporary theatre, and saw *Theodosius*, with *The Stratford Jubilee*. I was happy to see Dr. Johnson sitting in a conspicuous part of the pit, and receiving affectionate homage from all his acquaintance. We were quite gay and merry. I afterwards mentioned to him, that I condemned myself for being so, when poor Mr. and Mrs. Thrale were in such distress. JOHNSON. 'You are wrong, sir; twenty years hence Mr. and Mrs. Thrale will not suffer much pain from the death of their son. Now, sir, you are to consider, that distance of place, as well as distance of time, operates upon the human feelings: I would not have you be gay in the presence of the distressed, because it would shock them; but you may be gay at a distance. Pain for the loss of a friend, or of a relation whom we love, is occasioned by the want which we feel: in time, the vacuity is filled with something else; or sometimes the vacuity closes up of itself.'"

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THE END.

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